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The Religious Foundations of the Managerial Therapeutic State

Paul Gottfried

The consolidation of managerial regimes has hinged on an often ignored religious precondition. Without liberal Protestantism, modern administration would not have established its political culture as decisively as it has. Obviously, some countries with enormous welfare states, like Belgium, Austria, and France are overwhelmingly Catholic (at least in terms of their confessional affiliation). Furthermore, non-Protestants in the US, Canada, and England vote disproportionately for political candidates who promise more, not less public administration. Finally, in preponderantly Protestant countries, Protestants are usually found in the right-center of what passes for the political spectrum.

Yet, as Thomas C. Reeves suggests, the Protestant mainline has become self-destructive.[1] Because of their association with trendy social views and disagreeable liturgical innovation, self-styled Protestant progressives are losing support. Those seeking spiritual and doctrinal certainty are turning away from a deformed Christianity and toward traditional forms of worship and belief. The *Yearbooks of American and Canadian Churches* reveals declining memberships and financial resources among mainline (mostly liberal) Protestant denominations. A tendency evident since the 1920s, by the 1990s it had become catastrophic. Membership in the American Baptist Church in the US (as opposed to the more conservative Southern Baptists) has shrunk from over 2 million earlier in the century to 1.5 million. In about fifty years, the American Episcopal Church has declined from a membership

1. Thomas C. Reeves, *The Empty Church: Does Religion Matter Anymore?*(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), pp. 1-37 and 133-66.

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of over 2.5 million to 1.6 million. The Presbyterian Church is at a longtime low of 2.7 million, while the United Church of Christ has gone down to 1.5 million, and the United Methodists to 8.5 million. Almost one half of the children of church-going Presbyterians have stopped attending services; and by 1983 nearly one half of mainliners were at least 50 years-old. The amount of money available for staffing mainline congregations is increasingly drying up, and most mainline denominations have neither the interest nor the resources for overseas missions. Of the 58% of the American population that are church-going Protestants, more and more are joining Fundamentalist and Evangelical denominations, e.g., the Southern Baptists (with 16 million members, the vast majority of whom are under 50).[2] In 1985, an extensive survey of the membership of the United Church of Christ (formed out of the Congregational, Evangelical and Reformed Churches) revealed that most members found nothing distinctive, theologically or morally, about their denomination. The closest they could come to defining a distinctive identity was by referring to general American values.[3]

Equally alarming has been the decline of the work and education ethic in American Protestantism, mainline churches in particular. In a devastating critique of Protestant seminaries, Paul Wilkes documents the replacement of traditional theological and classical training in Protestant divinity schools by rote invectives about "race, sex and class oppression." Not only are seminarians not expected to acquire what was once requisite learning for their vocation, but at Yale, Harvard, and Princeton Divinity Schools training is centered on combating sexism, homophobia and misogyny.[4]

Equally significant has been the relative fall of Protestant denominations from the ranks of American high achievers. According to a recent study about the ethnic and religious backgrounds of American whites, Episcopalians (the highest WASP group achievers) rate sixth, with the Presbyterians right behind them, in educational advancement and family income. Both Protestant groups, long viewed as socially successful, now trail behind Ashkenazi Jews, Irish, Italian, German, and Polish Catholics when measured by current achievement levels. Theological and moral

2. See *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches* (Nashville: 1996), pp. 255-56
3. Reeves, *op.cit.*, p. 31.
4. Paul Wilkes, "The Hands that would Shape our Souls," in *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1990), p. 74, tells about a New Testament professor at Protestant Episcopal Theological Seminary in Virginia who spoke of combating in her classes "not only biblical illiteracy but general illiteracy." Furthermore, Yale University Divinity School professor Christopher R. Seitz observes that his students "don't know the names of half of the books of the bible, whether Calvin lived before or after Augustine, what it means to say that Christ descended to the dead or acted 'in accordance with the Scriptures' . . ."

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mushiness, some critics suggest, is doing more than damaging the seminary training of liberalized Protestants.[5]

Though these observations are correct, neither individually nor collectively do they gainsay what is being argued. Catholic ethnics, as minorities, have generally positioned themselves to the left of majority populations. This tendency is even more dramatically apparent for American, Canadian, and European Jews, who combine strong lingering attachment to their own group and to Israel with the advocacy of open borders, alternative lifestyles, and extreme pluralism for their new countries. This Jewish double standard has aroused considerable controversy, but it is by no means confined to Jewish communities.[6] Southern Italian immigrants are overwhelmingly allied to left-of-center parties in Canada but also give enthusiastic reception to right-wing politicians from their homeland. Irish Catholics in England vote heavily for the Labour Party, but give no indication of supporting leftist parties in the Irish Republic. Indeed, many are devout, practicing Catholics, who, like Italian Canadians, live in patriarchal households with extended families. Their political efforts therefore go toward neutralizing the cultural and institutional bigotry and ethnocentrism of the majority outgroup.[7]

Furthermore, it is well-known that Catholic countries have advanced welfare states. Some, like Belgium, France, Luxembourg, and Austria, have gargantuan public sectors that continue to grow. Catholic societies may be especially prone to such arrangements, since, traditionally, Catholic social teachings have condemned "liberal" economics and advocated "just prices" and other anti-capitalist concepts. More than most 19th century Protestant theologians, Catholic social thinkers and churchmen have been sympathetic to labor movements, and have feared the disintegrating effects of a modern industrial society. Often this has been chalked up to the Church's credit, though some critics, from Max Weber to Michael Novak, have held that Catholics have had a long row to hoe, because of persistent neo-medieval social attitudes hardened into moral teachings.[8]

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5. Barry A. Kosmin and S. P. Lachman, *One Nation Under God* (New York, Harmony Books, 1993), pp. 257-263.

6. See Kevin MacDonald's methodologically uneven, but occasionally revealing, *Separation and Its Discontents,* 3 vols. (Westport and London: Praeger, 1994-1998).

7. For a study of how Italian communities in Canada have had a fictitious group identity foistered on them by the managerial state, see Paul Piccone, "Multicultural Homogenization" in *Telos* 113 (Fall 1998), pp. 173-200.

8. See Michael Novak, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

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Did this older Catholic corporatist or anti-modernist view of the state play a decisive role in bringing forth contemporary managerial regimes? The operative term is "decisive," since one need not insist that older forms of collectivism had no effect on later developments, e.g., by inculcating submission to administrative authority. More difficult to show, however, is a causal connection, unless a critical variable is introduced: namely, that Catholic political thinking and cultures inimical to classical liberal constitutional and economic arrangements were foundational for managerial-therapeutic regimes. This, however, is an unwarranted assumption.

Even granting a Catholic indisposition to the free market, it may be necessary to distinguish between traditional Catholic attitudes toward work and profit, and a managerial-therapeutic ethos. Exemplifying this distinction is the contrast between Quebec in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, and the same French Catholic province today. From 1936 until 1959, Quebec was run with an iron hand by its premier, Maurice Duplessis and his clericalist, initially reform-minded Union Nationale. Provincial subsidies were given to families with children, and social benefits were widely made available to workers. At the same time, divorces (and abortions) were difficult to obtain. Churchmen were treated with respect; and a tight censorship was enforced for traditional moral reasons.[9] Against this old-fashioned Catholic welfare state, something similar to which existed until recently in Ireland, it may be instructive to place the government of what by now is no more than a nominally Catholic Quebec. In this new Quebec, Catholic parental control of the family has given way to social workers and administrators, who have at least as much influence over family relations as the public sector does in the US. The provincial government responds readily to feminists and gays demanding protection against alleged discrimination and has moved toward making education into a means for instilling sensitivity.[10]

According to Ben Wattenberg, unlike Russia, Japan, and other military or economic powers, the US is "the most culturally potent nation in the world."[11] Thus, the US exports 25 times as many films and tv programs than it imports. American political and religious fashions are widely adopted in other societies. Not since the Roman Empire has such a truly imperial culture flourished. While European critics have a point about the convergence of staggering wealth and technological resources

9. Léon Dion, *Quebec: The Unfinished Revolution* (Ann Arbor: Books on Demand, 1999).
10. Ben Wattenberg, *The First Universal Nation* (New York: Free Press, 1992), p. 17.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 210-13.

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with the lack of concern about trampling on traditions as foundational for an exportable American culture there is an American legacy that Europeans have embraced with surprisingly little complaint. Though a possible source of much disquiet, it has nonetheless established itself in England, Germany, and other parts of Western and Central Europe as an epiphenomenon of universal democracy. This is the grafting on to administrative states of therapeutic and punitive agencies for shaping social consciousness and chastising those with defective sensitivity. In Germany, such indoctrination was not hard to explain after the WWII. Blaming Germans exclusively for Nazi tyranny and the insistence by the occupying Allied forces that Germans adopt a "militantly democratic" government necessitated a process of mass reeducation. From the creation of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and a federal court charged with protecting the German Constitution against "undemocratic enemies," to the use of public learning and government-subsidized culture to combat German nationalism and to inculcate "human rights," postwar Germans have had reconstruction thrust upon them. Though, in the 1970s, its primary targets shifted from Communist revolutionaries to conservative nationalists and Holocaust-deniers, the German criminalization of "undemocratic" elements is related unequivocally to the Nazi past.[12]

Thus, every year about 8,000 German journalists and scholars are tried by the government in courts for "inciting the public" against the democratic foundations of the German constitution.[13] These painful efforts at protecting democratic sentiment have at least minimal basis in fact: the anxiety about appearing to condone political views that may have led to Nazi war crimes. Given the recent sad history of Germany and the tendency of the mass media throughout the West to focus on "extreme nationalist" sentiments in Germany's political life, one can understand this extravagant reaction to unauthorized opinions. Less explainable is the similar path followed by the British government, with only scattered popular objections. Though having no Nazi past and no significant history of

12. Eckhard Jesse, *Verfassungsschutz in der Demokratie* (Cologne: Heymanns, 1990), pp. 257-305; and Martin Walser, "Über Freie und Unfreie Rede," in *Der Spiegel* (November 1994), pp. 130-138.

13. Thousands are put into jail for this offense, so that even *The New York Times* (June 27, 1998), while exhorting vigilance against "right-wing extremism," has expressed alarm about treating "truth-seeking journalists as common criminals." More Germans are now languishing in prison for expressing (unprogressive or insensitive) opinions than was the case in East Germany at the time of the fall of the Communist regime. See Gerald Bernett, "Journalisten — Verfolgung in Deutschland," in *Der Schlesier* (June 27, 1998).

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slavery, the British have declared all-out war against the scourge of prejudice toward racial minorities that have immigrated to England.

In a study of the Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968, and 1976. and of the Commission for Racial Equality created by these acts, Ray Honeyford shows how the British government came to imitate the crusade against discrimination then being waged across the Atlantic. (In due course, Canada, Australia, and other Anglophone countries would do exactly the same.) By now the Commission and those associated with it are authorized to remove books from libraries and schools (which rarely protest) and to prefer criminal charges against authors or publishers, when offense is thought to be given to an ethnic or racial group.[14]

When the British Nationality Act of 1948 made all citizens of the Empire into citizens of the mother country, non-Western immigrants began streaming into English cities. Only in 1952, when the Immigration Act set limits on the previous open-door policy, did the numbers of immigrants diminish. By then, tens of thousands of West Indian immigrants had settled on the east side of London, where the many social and cultural disruptions resulted in an increase in violent crime and a subsequent white backlash. Thereafter, a widely publicized pressure group, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), arose to put force into the 1965 Race Relations Act, which criminalizes discriminatory publications.[15] The Race Relations Act of 1976 went even further

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14. Ray Honeyford, *The Commission for Racial Equality: British Bureaucracy and Multiethnic Secrets* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998), pp. 51-91.

15. In response to the Act's Provision 70, dealing with incitement, a future Lord Chancellor, Lord Hailsham laments that abusive language had been separated from the intention to abet public disorder. This went against a fundamental principle of English common law: "that a crime should consist of two elements: first, there must be a prohibited act . . . . then there should be a state of mind . . . . quite deliberately the Government has created in this new clause an indictable offense in which the mental element is removed altogether." Hailsham was half right. Though the 1976 Act did not pay attention, under Common Law, to the mental state of the presumed offender, it did take into account a "state of mind." The intention on which it focused was moral purity, as inward separation on the part of the white Christian majority from what are considered to be bigoted attitudes. Honeyford emphasizes the social "guilt" abounding in his country, and the effectiveness of CARD in appealing to a widely shared sense of contrition. He also notes the unsettling definition of "racial minority" provided by the English High Court when the 1976 Race Relations Act was challenged: It excludes religion, biology and even common usage, but plays up "distinctness" in "cultural tradition" and "social customs and manners," or having been "conquered" or "oppressed." The majority population was being put on notice that any "ethnic" or "racial" group different from itself or having once been victimized has to be accorded special treatment. Failure to conform to this conduct would be a criminal offense.

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to satisfy CARD. It bans communications revealing ethnic prejudice, even those not likely to spark public disorder. The same act calls for proportionate racial outcomes in hiring situations (a bow in the direction of the then functioning Equal Employment Opportunities Commission in the US), and authorizes the Commission for Racial Equality to look for "hurtful language" directed against racial minorities.

Far more interesting than why minorities looking for a leg up on other groups or distrusting majority populations support such controls is why majority societies accept them. Such acceptance has not been the historical rule. Even relatively tolerant Anglo-American peoples until recently did not behave with deference toward those recently arrived and culturally alien. Immigrants were accepted or discouraged from coming, depending on economic needs, and depending on whether they could be fitted into an existing society. The desperate efforts now made by Western countries, particularly Protestant ones, to show themselves inwardly worthy of receiving populations entirely "distinct" from themselves is not a continuation of an older attitude toward immigration. It is in fact a *novum*, as is the eagerness of Western governments and the media to accept collective blame for racial and ethnic callousness and for lack of social concern.

The relevant political and moral attitude is an exaggerated and growing guilt found in the majority society about its past. This guilt is apparent whether one looks at Germans erecting Holocaust monuments to real Jewish victims or to smaller, less certifiable numbers of victimized homosexuals or to lesbian non-victims, or else at American Protestant organizations launching expiatory marches across Europe and the Middle East seeking descendants of Moslem and Jewish victims of the Crusades to apologize to. The most obvious example of this guilt is the link made by German politicians, clergy and journalists between Germany's present regime and required expiation for the Nazi and (in some accounts) German imperial past. As formulated most tellingly by Theodor Eschenburg in 1959: "The recognition of the indisputable and sole guilt of Hitler is indeed the basis for the entire politics of the Federal Republic."[16] Or, put even more portentously by Rudolf Wassermann in 1994: "He who denies the truth about Nazi extermination camps threatens the very foundations upon which the German Federal Republic is erected."[17]

A German feminist theologian, Dorothee Sölle, insists that German

16. Theodor Eschenburg, *Kritische Betrachtungen 1957-1961* (Munich: R. Piper, 1961), p. 164.
17. Rudolf Wassermann, *Das Freie Forum 4* (1994), p. 1.

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Christians should now devote themselves to seeking absolution before the world for Nazi crimes. Sölle mocks those Christian traditionalists who "are so ideologically isolated that a happening like Auschwitz does not cause them to alter their (theological) position."[18] The alternative proposed to the despair produced by a sinful disposition is "to come to terms with how we are entangled in the [political-economic] structure." Sölle's solution is to "assume guilt for political sin," which can be expiated by embracing revolution against the received authority structure.[19]

In 1999, the German government spent as much money and energy highlighting Nazi crimes at Buchenwald as it did advertising the cultural achievements of nearby Weimar, the city of Goethe, Schiller and Herder.[20] As Claus Nordbruch demonstrates in an account of the assault in Germany on historical, genetic, and anthropological research, facts matter little to custodians of political correctness. Far more crucial, from their perspective, is the maintenance of a contrite mood that serves social reconstructionist ends.[21] This is equally true for the Anglophone world, where "sensitivity" considerations are sometimes allowed to trump truth claims. Sensitivity requires that members of the majority society give special consideration to the self-esteem of those considered disadvantaged or victimized. In the US, hate crime legislation is widely accepted on the explicit assumption that a much higher percentage of interracial violence is committed by whites and Asians than by blacks. The facts, according to Justice Department statistics, are exactly the reverse: black males are at least six times as likely to engage in interracial violence as are white or Asian males, a figure close to the one reported for interracial crime in England.[22]

Why is there no widespread protest against this counterfactual reporting of interracial violence, and against hate crime laws being directed primarily against whites? Judging from their unguarded comments, people are not totally unaware of the racially disproportionate sources of violent crime in

18. Dorothee Sölle, *Beyond Mere Obedience*, tr. by L. W. Denef (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), p. 87.

19. Dorothee Sölle, *Political Theology*, tr. by John Shelly (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 92.

20. *The Economist* (September 4, 1999), p. 52.

21. Claus Nordbruch, *Sind Gedanken noch Frei?* (Munich: Universitas, 1998), particularly pp. 164-76 and 188-94.

22. See the densely documented study by Jared Taylor, *The Color of Crime: Race, Crime and Violence in America* (Oakton, VA: New Century Foundation, 1999); and the balanced assessment of Taylor's findings by Walter Williams in his *Washington Times* syndicated column (August 19, 1999). For the figures on English crime, see Ray Honeyford, *Salisbury Review* (December 1995), pp. 27-31.

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the US. Americans may pretend not to see this reality for the same reason that Ralph Reed, of the Christian Coalition, agreed to charges by Abraham Foxman, of the Anti-Defamation League (April 1995), that American Christians were not sufficiently sorry about the history of Christian anti-Semitism.[23] Such a coming-to-terms by a "conservative" Christian and descendant of Anglo-American Protestant dissenters, whose ancestral connection to the crimes mentioned is highly dubious, shows to what extent the politics of atonement has spilled over even onto the American Christian Right.[24]

An attitudinal transformation of the majority population, would have had to take place for the therapeutic state to gain its present foothold. This change is connected to an altered religious consciousness that has affected Protestant majorities in the US and in other Anglophone countries. Here it may be helpful to distinguish those past conflicts between traditional and liberal Protestants in the US from what is going on now. As Sydney Ahlstrom and George M. Marsden show, stormy and divisive confrontations were an integral part of the American Protestant past, e.g., between anti-rationalist and Enlightenment Christians, and between those who accepted and rejected Evolution, biblical criticism, and Christian socialism. These Protestant divisions shaped the American cultural landscape for almost two centuries. Yet, it is incorrect to regard what passes for liberal Protestantism today as the mere distillation of earlier conflicts between the forces and opponents of scientific modernity. Unlike 19th century Protestant liberals, those now designated as such are not leading "Protestant churches into the world of modern science scholarship, philosophy, and global knowledge."[25] Nor are they imitating the Protestant champions of Charles Darwin, who attacked the older Protestant "interrelationship of faith, science, the Bible, morality, and civilization."[26] Rather, in seminaries and at conferences, Protestant liberals depict St. Paul as a repressed homosexual, reformulate biblical language to remove sexist impressions, and underscore the guilt of the

23. Reed remarked in particular on the failure of American Christians to come to terms with either the Spanish Inquisition or the Holocaust in *The New York Times* (April 4, 1995, A1. See also the sarcastic response to Reed by *The New York Times* columnist Frank Rich that the apology was too little too late.

24. Note also the insistence by the conservative candidate Gary Bauer on August 17, 1999, that as president he would exclude from consideration for a Supreme Court nomination "first of all anyone who is a bigot." The bigotry to which Bauer alludes is clearly that of white Christians, seeing that the prejudice of minorities is now widely viewed as reactive.

25. George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York, 1980), p. 17.

26. Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 783.

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Christian West for inestimable offenses against the rest of humanity.

Of course, it is possible to explain all this by focusing on a liberal "bureaucratic inner circle" that has been allowed to swallow up mainstream Lutheranism.[27] The "dysfunctional politician of church culture empowers the most aggressive," and given "a prior decay of theological coherence," Lutherans and other Protestants simply go along. The question that must be asked is whether the "dysfunctional politeness" would still operate if an alternate group of willful people came on the scene, e.g., one with a racist or explicitly patriarchal agenda. Would the Lutheran rank-and-file submit to any inner circle, or must it be one whose moral authority it has been prepared to accept?

Is the liberal Protestantism to which the outer circle yields representative of what liberal Protestants believed before? Today's Protestant liberals, after all, are not crusading for scientific methods and, outside of ritualized quarrels with creationists, have no burning interest in evolutionary biology. Indeed, Protestant liberals are in the forefront of those raging against the reactionary agenda of genetically-based thinking, or against anything with a social evolutionary spin.[28] It is also an exaggeration to view Christian liberals and other followers as "consumer Christians."[29] If liberal Protestant clergy and their parishioners were no more than self-indulgent hedonists, asserting "the divine right of the consumer to choose as he or she pleases," why do they also depict themselves or allow their own groups to be depicted as racists, sexists, and homophobes?

The increasing American Jewish involvement with the Holocaust from the late 1970s onward has been discussed by Peter Novick, who stresses, without denying its often frenzied emotionality, the multifunctional role of this involvement.[30] Assuring support for Israel from American Jews and non-Jews by invoking the fate of European Jewry besieged by implacable enemies, maintaining tribal solidarity and religious fellowship, and making American gentiles feel "responsible" in order to extract special consideration for Jewish special interests, like Holocaust museums, are all advantages Novick sees related to the American Jewish preoccupation with the

27. Leonard R. Klein, "Lutherans in Sexual Commotion," in *First Things* (May 1994), p. 35.

28. See, e.g., the lecture delivered against the "hierarchicalism of evolutionary theory" and its implicit "racist [and sexist] assumptions" in Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sex and God Talk: Toward a Feminist Theory* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), pp. 86-87.

29. Paul C. Vitz, *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 91-105.

30. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pp. 207-63.

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Nazi catastrophe. Even more intriguing are the reasons for interest in this destructive *European* event among American Christians. For the Christian Right, the Holocaust is an illustration of what happens when traditional morality is undermined. Thus, the Religious Right emphasizes the impiety of the "pagan" Nazis, who mandated and killed undesirable Jews and Christians. For Left Christians, however, Nazism exemplifies the effects of reactionary institutions and personalities that have not been brought under sufficient control. The way to keep these forces at bay is allegedly by resocializing people through education provided by progressive governments.

More perceptive, however, is Novick's (Nietzschean) observation that "the Holocaust fits into a religious tradition that has made an implement of agony and death its primary symbol." Novick contrasts this to a Jewish culture that has been "sharply critical of endowing agony and death with religious significance."[31] The contrast may be starker yet. Often, the Jewish emphasis on righteous victims has been self-pitying and, in some cases, even manipulative, whereas Christians glorify suffering as an imitation of their Savior. Of course, this has not been the case among all Christians, especially among American Protestants who, in the past, saw themselves, by analogy to the Israelites, as a covenanted people living in a chosen land. This Protestant Old Testament Christianity, once characteristic of American Calvinists, has given way to a celebration of redemptive suffering in others, almost always non-Christians. The sufferers are not only venerated, but viewed as being victimized by Christians.[32]

Moreover, contrary to what Vitz suggests about the formal content of what more and more American Christians believe, the prevalent form of therapeutic religion does not exclude outward acceptance of Orthodox Christian doctrines. An analysis of recent surveys describes Americans as a "nation of biblical illiterates," but, significantly, 81% of them believe that the Bible is the word of God.[33] 82% of the American population identifies itself as Christian; 59% of those surveyed agreed that belief in Jesus Christ is the only assurance of eternal life. Another poll conducted

31. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

32. Novick quotes a professor of Jewish studies, who provides this description of Jewish-Christian encounters centered on the Holocaust. "The Christian partner in Holocaust discourse, standing as heir and representative of the Christian cultures in which . . . the Holocaust was nurtured, must obediently hear, acknowledge, and memorialize the truth of Jewish anguish and the legitimacy of Jewish outrage. The proper response of the Christian to the Jew is, by a kind of tacit mutual agreement, a spiritual self-annihilation, a confessing openness to one's own guilt that mirrors in subtle ways themes of classical Christian theology."

33. George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the Nineties* (New York: MacMillan, 1989), p. 4 and p. 20.

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in July 1994 indicates that 95% of the respondents believe in God. At least 90% believe in Heaven and a substantial majority continue to accept the reality of Hell, but also assume that they will go elsewhere after death.[34] Having digested these figures, Richard John Neuhaus has concluded, albeit with reservations, that: "Statistically, at least, America is as much a Christian nation as it was, and perhaps more so." With even more doubt, Neuhaus continues: "One of the most elementary facts about America is that its people are overwhelmingly Christian in their own understanding, and that they and many who are not Christian assume that the moral baseline of the society is the Judeo-Christian ethic."[35]

This conclusion is both surprising and true: surprising, because of the paucity of biblical and theological knowledge (and often interest) among the vast majority of Americans; true, because of their willingness to pay lip service to traditional Christian doctrines. Yet, there seems to be a distinctively American religiosity. Despite the rampant theological illiteracy and self-indulgent ethic encountered by Gallup pollsters, one finds widespread evidence of a distinctively Protestant mindset. The centrality of sinful dispositions and the inevitable division between the elect and the damned are Protestant concerns that current "liberal Protestantism" adapts successfully to its own use. It does this, moreover, within the context of a Protestant culture that is adapted to therapeutic and victimological agendas.

To identify this liberalization with "aggressive" mainline elites exclusively is to ignore its more general impact. Mainline congregations put up with liberal preaching because they believe it, in some sense, to be either Christian or pointing toward a higher ethic than the one they themselves practice. Thus, while grieving over disintegrating mainline Protestant denominations, Thomas Reeves praises them "for their long record of social and political activism [at least from the Social Gospel to the civil rights movement]."[36] Moreover, the feminist, gay, and anti-Western attitudes and rhetoric that Reeves associates with ailing mainline Protestantism are found in other Christian denominations as well, such as Quakers, Anabaptists, and even Evangelicals and Catholics. The lack of distinctiveness that mainline Christians associate with their groups may stem from the fact that what is fashionable in the mainline prevails elsewhere as well.[37]

34. *Ibid.*, p. 25; and *Gallup Poll Monthly* (May 1995), p. 4.

35. Richard John Neuhaus, "Pluralism and Wrong Answers," in *First Things* (June/July 1994), pp. 72-73.

36. See Reeves, *op. cit.*, p. XI.

37. See Paul Gottfried, "Thinking about Secularism," in *The World and I* 14 (July 1999), pp. 320-329.

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It is also questionable whether this trend should be ascribed to some catch-all "secularism," when Americans in fact still describe themselves as conventionally orthodox. In this self-description, they differ markedly from Europeans, most of whom are frankly and emphatically non-religious. It can also be argued that American secularism goes back to the country's Protestant past, as noted by James Kurth, who sees religious dissent and religious individuality as derived ultimately from certain aspects of Reformation theology.[38] While Jews or Muslims may draw on the same tradition, they sound like Protestant dissenters when they do so.[39]

A related fact, observed both by François Mitterand and Neapolitan feminist Giovanna Borrello, is that feminism flourishes better in Northern Protestant than in Latin Catholic societies. Borrello contrasts a "Greek-style democracy, which makes no provision for a female presence in its political life," to the "Northern European democracies, that make ample room for women." Despite his political orientation, Mitterand was skeptical about introducing sexual harassment measures into his own Latin Catholic society. The Protestant sectarians who settled in the New World not only opposed monarchy and its accompanying ecclesiastical structure, but also placed less stress than Catholics and High Church Protestants on the use of ecclesiastical dignities to accentuate sexual distinctions. Note the functional position of women in the Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker denominations, as opposed to Catholic and Anglo-Catholic ones. Though sectarian Protestants did not run to obliterate all social and political distinctions between the sexes, their religious life was entirely open to gender equality.[40]

Equally pertinent for the Protestant contribution to the present managerial regime is the view of sin as *an overshadowing* existential problem. In the classical Calvinist formulation, as passed down by Puritans, Presbyterians, and Baptists, fallen man's natural depravity taints whatever he does. So ubiquitous are the effects of Adam's Fall that unredeemed humanity is incapable of truly good acts or of doing anything to advance personal salvation. The grace by which the elect are justified is *opus extrinsecum*, an unmerited kindness provided by God, who ascribes grace from without to His fallen creation. As explained by Calvin in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, "All taint is wiped out by his [Christ's] purity, and there will be no divine condemnation. So the good works done by believers are

38. James Kurth, "The Protestant Deformation and American Foreign Policy" in *Orbis* 42 (Spring 1998), pp. 224-27.
39. Interview in *Il Mattino* (July 18, 1999), p. 24.
40. Interview quoted in *Ex Femina* (July 1997), pp. 16-17.

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considered righteous, that is, they are imputed for righteousness."[41]

The Calvinist idea of the sinner's total dependence on divine redemption fostered in colonial New England a belief in "double predestination." Outside of all time, God had chosen a fixed number of human souls both for salvation and for damnation. No subsequent human action can change this grim decision, and the most that can be done in terms of advancing one's eternal fortunes is looking for signs of grace in the way one lives and in the companions one keeps. Christ, the Calvinists believed, died not for all sinners but only for the elect.

As is by new well known, this gloomy theology led not to fatalism, but rather to a flurry of activity intended to prove to oneself and to others one's status as a saint. "Perseverance of the saints" was as much of a Calvinist tenet as the other teachings proclaimed by what, for American Calvinists, was the authoritative 1618 Council of Dortrecht. Beside the beliefs in total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, and irresistible grace, Calvinists found theological grounds to reach out to targets of conversion and to other possible saints. Looking for and living among the redeemed framed the American Protestant experience. According to Barry Shain, the life of Calvinist communities, as illustrated by those in early America, was one of relentlessly maintained moral order, as was thought appropriate for visible saints.[42] This regimen of sanctified living extended to family relations, which were characterized by stern parental discipline and steady admonishment against sloth, frivolity, and extravagance. In Shain's opinion, the social virtue and character development favored by applied Calvinism contributed to the moral foundations of American republican government.[43] The same mindset and accompanying culture have shaped the current political climate. Without certain Protestant, more particularly Calvinist attitudes and concerns, the therapeutic state *cum* victimology would not have done so well in the US and in other Western, predominantly Protestant societies.

Leon Podles' study of the effects of the feminization of Christianity on Catholic as well as Protestant religious life details how both female and feminist influences have affected theology and worship in Western Christianity and how the increasing withdrawal by men from public religious

41. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960). Book One, pp. 726-727.

42. Barry Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 128-35.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-240.

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activity has made these changes possible. He traces this process to the pre-modern period and interprets the bridal mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux and other medieval theologians, and a feminized trinitarian thinking going back to the early church, as bridges to a modern demasculinized Christianity.[44] This development, Podler insists, is not limited to liberal denominations. Similarly, Colleen McDannell explores the way the "Christian home" in 19th century America became the focal point for an increasingly feminized Christian culture. Both Catholics, particularly Irish Catholics, and Protestants came to see the home as the center of devotional life. While at least initially it was fathers who presided over the household prayers and Bible-reading, by the end of the Victorian era "maternal domestic leadership" had taken over.[45]

Equally important for American religious life is the intertwining of a feminism stressing victimization with older Protestant themes of sin and redemption. This framework survives in juxtaposition with two cultural particularities: general indifference to or ignorance of biblical texts (as documented by Gallup polls and by professors of biblical theology) and a general lack of interest in theology as either a subject or existential concern. Cultural and historical illiteracy intersects the theology of guilt in sometimes striking ways, reinforcing it but also making it seem to rest on insubstantial knowledge. For example, a majority of Americans polled consider the Holocaust to have been the worst "tragedy in history" and something about which Americans should constantly be reminded but also something about which the respondents "know little or nothing.[46] Given this popular devotion to somber responsibility for the factually unknown, it is easy to understand the success of a reformulated Protestantism that highlights victim theories of history and stresses self-esteem for the putatively disadvantaged.

These features are abundantly present in the feminized Christianity of Rosemary Radford Ruether, which recasts the narratives of the Fall, Christ's suffering, and promise of redemption in largely non-Biblical, socially fashionable terms. In Ruether's view, "sexism must be seen as the original and primary model for analyzing the state of the Fall." Indeed, "social alienation begins in self-alienation experienced as

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44. Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 1999), pp. 102-39.

45. Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), pp. 127-49.

46. In *Jerusalem Post* (April 24, 1983), p. 3.

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estrangement between the self and the body. The oppressive relationship of the man to the woman is essentially the social projection of the self-alienation which translates certain initial biological differences into a power relationship. This relationship in turn is totalized in social structures and cultural modes that eliminate woman's autonomous personhood to define her solely in terms of male needs and negations."[47] From these comments, it is possible to extract an account of the Fall emphasizing the pervasive effect of sin and linking this condition to a fall from original wholeness. The results of this primal disaster are gender identities and human relations organized around them. While this variant on the biblical Fall looks gnostic, and not orthodox Christian, it nonetheless mimics the Christian Protestant belief in a *radical* falling away from God.

This alternate story of the Fall also supports the Protestant core conviction that sin profoundly alters human nature, which requires radical outside assistance to be mended. In Ruether's scheme, the dehumanized female victim rises by "anger and pride," here seen as "theological virtues," to challenge the patriarchal *status quo*. From this infused revolutionary anger, women gain "the power to transcend false consciousness and break its chains."[48] Liberated women raise the moral awareness of men equally trapped in "totalizing social structures," a particularly pressing task, given the tie between "masculinity and racism." Krichbaum views sin as masculine false consciousness, witnessed by "the ease with which white males discuss both urgent social issues and the unsatisfactoriness of their own lives." Krichbaum inveighs against "dehumanizing competitiveness" and "white masculinity" as the fruits of an unredeemed society. Against these evil forces, he points to the hope of "expressive personhood." This will flourish where "the liberated male will define as productive only that part of his time, energy, and skill that he devotes to the needs caused by injustice, disease, and social callousness."[49]

Such *phrases consacrées* are neither original nor biblically based. Often banal and badly cobbled together, these assertions may well distress serious theologians and traditional Christians. But they are restatements of beliefs that have become central to American Christian thinking and are recognizably Protestant even in their present formulation. Thus,

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47. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and the Theology Liberation* in *Christian Century*, December 12, 1973, p. 1224.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 1226.
49. Daniel H. Krichbaum, "Modernity and Racism," in *Christian Century* (January 10, 1973), p. 46.

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Ruether, instead of dispensing with all references to Christ's sufferings, offers an updated theology of the cross. She warns against "stifling the cry of Jesus by speaking of his victory over death." The cross "stands for unjust suffering throughout history" and must be recalled so that Christians today can work resolutely to liberate women and other oppressed groups from status and hierarchical relations.[50] Chris Glaser extends the same theology of the cross to those with alternative lifestyles, by presenting Jesus as incipiently gay and suffering as an example of what gays must endure in a world not yet redeemed from insensitivity.[51]

Such ideas, which have been popularized in mainstream Protestant publications, do not merely reprise an older feminized Christianity any more than they restate 19th century enlightened or scientific Christianity. They invoke a particular social consciousness, whether a sensitized one for the non-victimized or an indignantly revolutionary one for designated victims, which is seen to incorporate Christian sentiments. Those blessed with this social consciousness will seek others in the community of grace and express their spiritual state through suitable gestures. The categorical rejection by a non-victim group of their civilization, gender, race, or ancestors is not inconsistent with this posture, inasmuch as the unredeemed world or society in its actual state is held to be reprobate. It is the fallen world, outside of the redeemed consciousness of the sensitive, and must be swept aside to make room for what Ruether calls the "messianic state": a world in which Christ as a synecdoche for all designated victims will no longer be crucified.

In a related observation, Philip Jenkins stresses the transfer of the images and idea of redemptive suffering in American culture from an Orthodox Christian to a politically correct context "The example most commonly offered for this role, the consensus choice for ultimate sanctity, was Martin Luther King, crucified for our sins in Memphis."[52] According

50. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *To Change the World* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), p. 67.

51. Chris Glaser, *Come Home: Reclaiming Spirituality and Community as Gay Men and Lesbians* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990); and the review by Elizabeth Carol Reiss in *Christianity and Crisis* (November 18, 1991), pp. 372-73.

52. Jenkins also observes the "liberal hagiography" surrounding the slain homosexual Matthew Shepard, murdered in Wyoming in October 1999: "The crime was portrayed strictly in terms of martyrdom and Calvary, complete with the grotesque image of crucifixion on barbed wire. The rhetorical implications were hammered home repeatedly and unsubtly. We are all guilty for his death, we must purge such sins from ourselves and our communities, how thoroughly our whole culture is permeated by sin and ungodliness." See "New Faiths for Old" in *Chronicles* (December, 1999), p. 15.

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to Jenkins, Americans believe in saints, martyrs, and Christ figures (if not Christ). They accept the notion of original sin in the perverse form of original abuse and they hope for redemption through therapy. In however warped a form, traditional Christian and particularly Protestant assumptions still have a deep resonance. This is important not only for understanding social ideologies, but also the kind of political rhetoric likely to appeal to an audience which mistakenly considers itself as secular, while actually imbued with biblical and apocalyptic assumptions.[53]

It may further be necessary to distinguish this theology of victimization from the feminized Christianity treated by Podle and McDannell. Though women and, to a lesser extent, gays have become dominant in Western Christian life, what has resulted is not an intensification of an older demasculinized Christianity. Far more germane is the identification of current Christianity with a war against gender distinctions or, even more accurately, the view of such distinctions as oppressive and symptomatic of humankind's fallen state. No mere outgrowth of Victorian domestic religiosity or of the moral crusades against booze and male carousing waged by Methodist matrons at the turn of the century, it is an attempt to put the Judeo-Christian account of Creation and Fall into androgynous terms. Small wonder that feminist theologians have turned to hermetic, Cabalistic, and other neo-Platonic sources to construct their alternate accounts of the origin of humankind. For them, the task is to show in appropriate mythic form that sexual differentiation and its social consequences are at the opposite pole of an original hermaphrodite perfection.[54]

Such ideas have found their way into mainstream Protestant teaching and preaching as American religion has become uncoupled from precise biblical texts and a binding theological tradition. The larger point is that a normative Christianity, derived from at least vestigial Protestant categories, does exist and is thriving in the US as well as in other Anglophone societies. Americans consider themselves a churchgoing people, 51% of whom are affiliated with Christian denominations, which they support financially and whose services they attend at least once a month.[55] Contrary to some

53. Claus Nordbruch, "Die selbsternannten Tugendwächter im Visier," in *Neue Zürichen Zeitung* (June 12, 1999), editorial page; and Dana L. Cloud, *Control and Consolidation in American Politics and Culture: Rhetoric of Therapy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

54. See Eric Voegelin's *Science, Politics and Criticism*, tr. by W. J. Fitzpatrick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); and Jacob Taubes' anthology of political gnosticism, *Gnosis und Politik* (Munich, Paderborn, Vienna, Zurich: Fink Verlag, 1984).

55. *USA Today* (April 1, 1994), p. 2.

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commentators, these attendees are not demonstrably disgusted, even if they feel belabored by the liberal messages they hear. The predominantly female church members may well agree with the preaching, while men go along with them less enthusiastically. To whatever extent these men think about religious and moral questions, their views, though held less intensely, parallel those of their wives. The point is that the hemorrhaging of mainstream denominations does not indicate a growing Protestant rejection of victimological politics. Such politics are not limited to mainstream Protestantism and are acceptable to conservative denominations in a diluted form. Because members of these denominations are drawn back to a more traditional concept of redemption does not mean that they have abandoned liberal Protestant victimization entirely. While it may be objected that conservative denominations do not reach out to victims sincerely or sufficiently, they nonetheless make many of the same gestures of liberal Protestants. Evangelicals who wish to cure homosexuals to make them "feel better about themselves" or Southern Baptist conventions that apologize for slavery and racism may not strike liberal Protestants as particularly open-minded or contrite. But the difference here is one of degree, not of kind. It is hard to see what political gain is to be had when Fundamentalists go about apologizing to blacks for racist acts for which they themselves are not personally responsible. What worldly benefit is being pursued, for example, by Royce Money, president of Abilene Christian University, who makes a practice of asking forgiveness from blacks for the segregation enforced at his school until the 1960s? Money insists that "we need to confess the sins of racism and discrimination from the past. We are truly sorry."[56]

Aside from Evangelicals for Social Action and other groups that try to bridge the perceived distance between conservative Protestant theology and liberal Protestant politics, those on the right of the Protestant spectrum have incorporated *American* liberal Protestant features. Although its roots are in a pre-millenialist and even otherworldly form of faith, the Religious Right has followed the American Protestant pattern of apologizing to Jews and blacks for past Christian (sometimes European Christian) misdeeds and oversights and of "entering into dialogue" with the gay community.[57] Moreover, as one passes on to the Evangelicals who have located outside the South and

56. In October 1999 Money convened a "One-in-Christ Conference" at which he repeatedly asked "forgiveness" for himself and the Abilene Christian University for past racist sins. See *St. Petersburg Time* (November 27, 1999), p. 5.

57. That there is a growing indistinguishability between establishment Evangelicals and mainline Protestants is the recurrent theme of *Modern Reformation* magazine and its "classical Reformation Christian" founder David F. Wells.

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begun to appeal to the professional classes, Mark A. Shibley explains, "the social-class differences between evangelical and mainline Protestants diminish, and as evangelicals slowly but steadily come to embrace many elements of modern culture, including greater tolerance for alternative lifestyles, it follows that we must look beyond ideology to explain its current popularity." Shibley claims that "the evangelical churches that are growing are distinguishing themselves as service-oriented congregations."[58]

The current liberal Protestant theology is entirely compatible with the evolution of the managerial state into a regime promoting self-esteem for victims. Liberal Protestant theology, which has moved from the Quakers, New Order Anabaptists, and mainline denominations into other Christian confessions, favors a broadly interventionist government. Without administrative forays into the fallen world of biological and social distinctions, sin as political incorrectness would presumably rage even more than it does as pastor J. Philip Wogaman argues in defense of Clinton's presidency. As a Christian, Wogaman insists, he finds it necessary to treat the President's sexual escapades as a "private vice," offset by his war against sexism, racism and social justice.[59] Like other Protestant liberals, Wogaman has moved from Social Gospel concerns of the early 1960s, such as advocating radical economic redistribution to be carried out by the federal government, to Christian anxieties about victims of Western society.[60]

It is also the "sacred" duty of Western, particularly American political leaders to lament past offenses against designated victims. Such acts are the modern equivalents of the days of fasting and public penance practiced by the visible saints in Puritan New England. They are the signs (similar to the Calvinist notae) by which the godly community and godly magistrates recognize the workings of grace. It is, of course, less significant whether all non-blacks in the U.S. are guilty of the sin of slavery than the fact that President Clinton utters such a statement. Clergy and journalists rose to his defense when he did, because of the sensitivity revealed by this act of collective confession for a sinful nation.[61]

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58. Mark A. Shibley, *Resurgent Evangelism in the United States* (Columbia: South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 4-5.

59. Interview of Wogaman by CSPAN (February 3, 1999). A critical analysis of Wogaman's views on the Clinton presidency was printed in *Reformiste Presse* (August 5, 1998).

60. Wogaman has championed his positions, not as an isolated eccentric, but as the spiritual head of a prestigious Methodist congregation, who turned to the ministry after a long, distinguished career as a professor of "Christian social ethics."

61. See *The New York Times* (April 1, 1998), p. A12, and for the moral defense of the President's apology, *ibid.* (April 5, 1998), pp. D1 and D15.

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The dismissal of such gestures by some conservative Christians as "cheap grace" or mere grandstanding overlooks their religious function. The public affirmation of a liberal Protestant theology of social guilt reflects the transformed Calvinism animating American confessional life and informing the civic culture. The declaration of guilt, to be taken seriously as a moral act, need not be based on documentable facts or lead to a painful individual exercise of penance. Confessing guilt for the Holocaust or slavery does not require that the confessee ask for punishment as a Nazi war criminal or as a perpetrator of racial injustice. When the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in July 1995 condemned its theological progenitor as the inspiration for Nazi war crimes against the Jews, it did not proceed to take what would have been the logical next step of disavowing Martin Luther and changing its denominational name.[62] The reason was not hypocrisy or insincere remorse for exaggerated charges. The meaning of the confession is situated in the act performed. It witnesses to the purity of heart that marks the spiritually redeemed in a culture of victims.

A valid distinction should be drawn between being "complicit" in the Nazi Holocaust and living in a society whose government did not do all it could to save eventual Nazi victims. The US did combat and destroy German Nazism and gave refuge to some of those fleeing it, although it certainly might have done more.[63] In comparison to the pitifully little the American government did to rescue victims of Stalinist tyranny, moreover, its record of ending Nazi genocide looks good. Why then must American Christians repeatedly affirm collective guilt for this partial sin of omission committed by the Roosevelt administration, which in any case took vigorous steps against Nazi Germany.[64] But such questioning does not shed light on the spiritual cleansing intended by proclamations of historical and social guilt. Such an act is performed not only to underline the grace of the confessee, but to bring satisfaction to those who feel aggrieved and enjoy public recognition as victims. The Anti-Defamation League and Canadian Jewish Congress, which exist to find and expose "anti-Semitism" in the Christian world, usually

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62. This resolution is found in the printed minutes of the church's annual convention, held in Winnipeg on July 14, 1995, pp. 47-48.

63. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-59.

64. For a useful *mise à point*, see Lucy Davidowicz (who can hardly be accused of not being zealous enough), "Could America Have Rescued Europe's Jews?" in *What Is the Use of Jewish History?* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1980), pp. 160-173.

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respond with enthusiasm to the recognition of what is their reason for being. But the interests of those making and receiving confessions are not the same. Christian leaders and their congregations confess to extravagant charges, because of a specific religious disposition; the objects of the apology happily accept the confessions, because of their own professional investments and a sense of grievance that partly sustains their ethnic communities.[65]

Unlike Catholics, Protestants (except traditionalist Lutherans) have no sacrament of penance and therefore may carry around a profound sense of personal guilt. Moreover, since the classical Protestant view of original sin is that of a totally disfiguring power in the absence of divine grace, this guilt is presumably burdensome. It may also account for the oscillations among classical Protestants between mortifying unworthiness and personal exaltation as one of the elect of God. Depending on how the individual sinner looks upon his relationship with his divine judge, he may experience either state of mind. Nonetheless, there are Protestant rituals of repentance, which have marked Protestant cultures deeply. These rituals go from the fessing-up done by repentant sinners at revival meetings and at Southern Baptist services to the days of "public humiliation" practiced in colonial New England. According to Perry Miller, days of fasting and repentance were a common feature of the American Revolutionary era.[66] At both the national and state levels, such days were proclaimed and multiplied, so that the country in arms might, in the words of the proclamation issued at Valley Forge in December 1777, make a "penitent confession of their manifold sins."[67] These acts of penance were entirely public, for those involved in them were interacting with others in a godly community. They were also public in the sense that those doing them were exhibiting ascribed grace. By their own nature, sinners trapped in original sin would not be able to bring forth true acts of repentance. As emphasized by Calvin in the *Institutes*, authentic penance indicates a prior operation of grace.[68]

Public penance and the accompanying confessions have a long history in the US, and a densely confessional literature is highly characteristic of

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65. See the penetrating essay on Novick's book by A. C. Brownfeld in *Issues* (Fall 1999), pp. 1, 2 and 7.

66. Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in *The Shaping of American Religion*, ed. by J. W. Smith and A. L. Jamison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 322-68.

67. Shain, *The Myth of American Individualism*, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

68. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, *op. cit.*, Second Vol., pp. 930-32.

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the political and moral conversions of public personalities.[69] Most significantly, calling attention to guilt is related to a reaching out to the benighted in one's society and to bigots and victims elsewhere. This too may be seen as the operation of grace in a world steeped in sin as insensitivity.[70] At any rate, a religious worldview both shapes and reflects the progress of the managerial state toward a therapeutic regime centered on raising the victims' self-esteem. This worldview is liberal Protestantism, as currently understood. While this view is particularly well established in the Anglo-American world, it is less and less compelling the farther one moves away from it.[71] In the US at least, liberal Protestant thinking has gained currency because it is widely accepted. This does not mean that there is no opposition to it within Protestant denominations, or that the growth of Evangelical and Fundamentalist congregations does not signify dissatisfaction with mainline Protestantism. Yet, liberal Protestant views have permeated non-mainline denominations and have cropped up with particular force in the progressive wing of the Catholic Church in the US and in Europe. If mainline American Protestant churches have failed to hold on to the young, they nonetheless represent ideas about victims and the oppressed, and the supersession of Old Testament morality by the rule of love, which have become axiomatic for generic Christians. Biblical illiteracy, submission to self-appointed congregational inner circles, and what William J. Abraham calls "institutionalists concerned less with

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69. In a genre derived from St. Augustine and 17th century Puritans, Marxists with "second thoughts" and Irish Catholic conservatives who have moved to the far left produce literary confessions that could have come only from a Protestantized America. The same cultural judgment would apply *a fortiori* to the politically correct penance being described: the alacrity shown by the American Protestant establishment in approving public confessions tells as much about old memories as it does about ideology.

70. This zeal also helps explain the direction Henry Kissinger fears (see syndicated column August 17, 1999) that NATO and Western international relations are moving: toward "a new style of foreign policy driven by domestic politics and the invocation of universalistic moral slogans." Kissinger mocks the "liturgical purposes" of Western alliances under Anglo-American guidance. He singles out Clinton and Blair for special blame, as morally-driven violators of the sovereignty of countries that have not harmed the US.

71. Thus, at the convocation of Anglican prelates in Lambeth, England in 1999, Asians and Africans expressed horror at (and overwhelmingly voted against) a proposal to permit the ordination of gays. By contrast, many Anglo-American bishops defended that proposal as expressive of Christianity, and Bishop Spong of Newark went so far as to complain about the "backwardness" of Third World churchmen who stood in the way of his agenda. Both sides were right: the Asians and Africans, when they appealed to biblical morality and Christian natural law tradition; and the American and British, when they drew upon their own mainstream Christianity. See *The Lambeth Daily* (the official publication of the Conference from July 4, 1999 through August 8, 1999.

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the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality and related issues than with the future of the denomination" have all played roles in this process.[72] But the result has been the growing identification of American religion with the emerging therapeutic state.

This therapeutic regime, which deprecates the history of the majority population and associates sin with insensitive behavior, would not be accepted had there not been a pervasive social guilt and the view of social redemption inculcated by the general religious culture. This helps explain why majority populations act "unnaturally," in the sense that Max Weber understood the inner-worldly asceticism of early Protestant society. Absent a Calvinist moral theology, Weber reasoned, one could not grasp the sacrifice that the early modern European bourgeoisie made in order to accumulate investment capital.[73] In a similar way, absent the guilt and sensitivity ethic preached by contemporary Christianity, it is hard to imagine the enthusiasm for alien cultures and culturally discordant immigrants or the collective revulsion for a specifically white Western history now expressed by political and intellectual elites. Although, given the Nazi record of atrocities and the postwar attempts at "German reeducation," the Germans may be a special case, the renunciation of a specifically national heritage to the exclusion of any cultural group has now been accepted by other Western, particularly Protestant peoples. Behind this down-playing of "common cultural capital" is the unmistakable moral-religious imperative, only applied to Western Christian countries, not to notice their distinctive identities, except when recalling past intolerance or engaging in collective confession.[74]

Philip Rieff and Paul Vitz define American therapeutic religion in terms of "feeling good about one's self" without the Christian imperative to "die to self." This, however, overlooks what is unpleasurable in the current liberal religion. Thus, it is wrong to believe that conservative denominations attract members only because of their appeal to hard rules and austere living.[75] Many converts are tired of being preached at constantly

72. William J. Abraham, "United Methodists at the End of the Mainline," in *First Things* 84 (June/July 1998), pp. 28-33.

73. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. by Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1958), pp. 159-83.

74. Thus, Michael Ignatieff warns against "exaggerating the importance" of Canadian history for Canadians. He "refuses to believe that the widely diffused knowledge of Canadian history is essential to Canadian identity and some kind of necessary prerequisite for adequate citizenship." Canada, for Ignatieff, is not about a history or heritage other than "shared understandings" about the rules of democracy. See *National Post* (September 4, 1999), p. B5.

75. Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Use of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); and *Psychology as Religion, op. cit.*

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about alleged social failings. They prefer being told that they are righteous and standing up for God's word. Billingsley suggests[76] that it is the upbeat quality of Evangelical Christianity (rather than its emphasis on human guilt) which accounts for some of its recruiting success. In a related flight from a culture of guilt, young Germans are seeking to move to Israel and asking to become Jews (providing the Jews will take them). One German woman now in Israel gave as the reason for this development that her own people "want to regain a sense of ethnic pride in a country where nationalist sentiments are not tainted with associations of collective guilt."[77] While Jewish organizations have contributed to this sense of guilt, it has also been fed by postwar German Christianity.

For most Americans, there is nothing extraordinary about the connection between Christianity and a liberal social agenda.[78] While most Americans believe in the Bible as revealed truth, they also make little effort to study it. And, unlike those Calvinists evoked by Barry Shain, no more than a small minority in the American present belong to communities organized around biblical morality. It seems that while most Americans are at least nominally Christian, they have no perceptible theological interest. Such Christians take their religious and other bearings, like most people everywhere, from what those in authority tell them and, in this case, without fretting over the bad fit between religious revelation and political sensitivity. The first, it is hoped, can be subsumed conveniently under the second. If mean-spirited zealots, moreover, cite scriptural passages to justify gender distinctions and strictures against gays, quoting Scripture can be attributed to bad manners or else to not stressing sufficiently Christ's example of non-judgmental love.

Those who embrace such Christianity are habituated to its products by life under the managerial state. For several generations Westerners have accepted democracy as socialization and as rule by public administrators. The behavioral patterns thereby formed have increased social conformity and discouraged widespread questioning of established social truths. But the patterns of influence may be reciprocal, and not only in the US. A Protestant predisposition to such control operates even without the selective social guilt characteristic of American liberal Christianity.

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76. K. L. Billingsley, *From Mainline to Sideline* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Policy Center, 1990).

77. See *The Jerusalem Post* (October 11, 1999).

78. Thus readers of *Christian Century* do not seem to balk at the description of Evangelical singer Marsha Stevens (March 7, 1999) as "a Jesus-loving, Bible-believing, God-fearing, lesbian Christian."

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But this predisposition may be all the more firmly rooted where such guilt is emphasized and where public administration presents itself as a vehicle for enforcing sensitive attitudes.[79] In its own peculiar way, the modern state has revived the alliance of throne and altar once cherished by 19th century enemies of the French Revolution. The complementarity of the secular and ecclesiastical swords has been restored, in the sense that the dominant religious culture gives aid and direction to state purposes. The doctrinal pluralism proclaimed as the cornerstone of United Methodism in the postwar period has evolved exactly like the pluralism taught by the managerial state, as a provisional stage in the taking over of institutions by the advocates and implementers of "inclusiveness." This process is not an isolated phenomenon. It encapsulates the transition of the managerial therapeutic state, from a self-declared defender of pluralistic openness to a leveler of inherited social ethics. That the proudly secular managerial state imitates the "inclusiveness" of mainstream Christianity only adds to the historical irony.

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79. As Eric Werner shows, resistance to state directives and to the multicultural policies imposed by the Swiss federal government is weaker in Protestant than in Catholic regions. The tendencies to reduce religious values to a personal affair and to blur the line between institutional religion and state authorities render Swiss Protestants particularly receptive to centralized administrative control. See the interview with Werner in *Catholica* (Summer 1999), pp. 97-105, and his book *De la misère intellectuelle et morale en Suisse romande* (Lausanne: l'Age d'Homme, 1981). Contrary to Werner's assertion, the Suisses Romands voted just as heavily for conservative regionalist Christoph Blocher and his Democratic Union of the Center Party in October's Swiss Federal Elections as did Blocher's own group, the *Suisses alémaniques*. See *Corriere della Sera* (October 25, 1999), pp. 11-12; and *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (October 25, 1999).

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*Europe at the Nadir of its Decline**

Guido D. Neri

Europe and the European Union are now on the agenda, and there are heated discussions concerning both monetary and social unification. Ralf Dahrendorf, a Euroskeptic, has recently pointed out that "The worst part of the European Union is the deadly boredom surrounding most of the issues with which it deals." The endless technical questions tackled by experts and interest groups are important and unavoidable, but they concern only those occasionally affected by them. Rarely is the fundamental question ever posed: "What is the real reason why we are seeking European Union?"[1]

For their part, philosophers have rediscovered an old theme: the philosophical *idea* of Europe. Jan Patocka's reflections do not address Dahrendorf's question directly. They go back a couple of decades and belong in another geopolitical context. They are neither Euroskeptic nor Eurorodogmatic; they are part of a particular philosophy of history and do not lead to univocal conclusions concerning current questions. They do, however, confront directly a question which should not be avoided: *what is Europe*?

Europe's Modern Self-Consciousness

The modern idea of Europe developed first during the Enlightenment, as a philosophical idea, then, in the age of Romanticism, as a Christian idea, and, finally, as a synthesis of the two in the great philosophy of history in the 19th century. During the 18th century, European civilization celebrated itself with an image of progress uninterrupted for centuries and promising the best for all that is to come. In 1839, the historian Guizot could write that

* Originally published in *aut aut* 283-284 (January-April 1998), pp. 129-156.

1. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Perché l'Europa? Riflessioni di un Europeista Scettico* (Bari: Laterza, 1997), pp.V-VII and 3.

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Europe was now on the path of "eternal truth, of the plan of providence."[2] But, the voices of progressive optimism were not the only ones heard during that century, which soon began to question itself concerning the reversal of progress and its promises. The clash between social conditions, the material and spiritual impoverishment brought about precisely by the development of the productive forces, by inhumanity, and by the regression of progressive society, permeate the literature of all countries.

Awareness of modernity's nihilistic reversals among the great Russian writers turned into a profound critique of the West and of its values. Consciousness of the contradictions undermining modern Europe was very much alive from Marx to Nietzsche. For Marx, it is a civilization in which "everything seems pregnant with its opposite." "On the one hand, industrial and scientific forces have been brought to life such as no previous era of history could dream of. On the other, signs of deterioration are evident, a deterioration which places the famous horrors of the last days of the Roman Empire in the shade." "Mankind becomes lord over nature but man becomes slave of man or slave of his own base nature."[3] The modern European, who confuses chronological progress with human improvement, who is so proud of his civility and knowledge, for Nietzsche, is a smaller man. The products of this refined civilization are men who now want only nothingness. "For a long time, all European culture has been moving with a tortured tension which grows from decade to decade, as if headed toward a catastrophe: uneasy, violent, precipitous: like a river which wants to *flow out*, which no longer remembers, which is afraid to remember."[4]

With the great massacres of WWI, Nietzsche's words have turned out to be prophetic. Yet, it was only an anticipation: having reached the edge of the abyss, Europe did not change course, but prepared itself for the final catastrophe. Between the two wars, the consciousness of the decline awaiting Europe is very vivid in the thinking of many intellectuals. Paul Valéry compared the vitality of European culture, which distinguished it from all others, because of its "passion to understand" and "rigorous will," with its obtuse and primitive politics, which used this culture only to make terrible and barbaric weapons. "Nations are estranged from one another . . . they look at each other with a curiosity tied to anxiety . . . they are either bitten

2. See Federico Chabod, *Storia dell'Idea di Europa* (Bari: Laterza, 1989), p. 141.
3. Cited in Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 152.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Frammenti Postumi 1887-1888*, in Colli and Montanari, eds., *Opere* (Milan: Adelphi, 1971), Vol.VIII, 2, II, 411, pp.392-393.

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by jealousy or full of disdain. . ." "More than one nation nourishes the inherent conviction to be, in and of itself, the nation *par excellence* . . . none of them likes to consider its own misadventures as its legitimate progeny."[5] For philosophers like Husserl, scientific culture itself, in the most fundamental sense, is responsible for the crisis into which Europe has fallen: its best product, the modern sciences, have failed in their role as spiritual guides. Having lost every trace of their philosophical self-consciousness, these sciences have become flattened into an objectivistic and naturalistic vision reflected in human relations: "Factual sciences produce factual men." Thus, the sciences degenerate to mere technology at the service of the "lords and owners of this world."[6] Only a radical philosophical self-consciousness, able to restore philosophy's "arcontic" function, could reproduce the Greek miracle, in a renewed European humanity.[7]

"It is a real irony," said Patocka "that Husserl wrote on the phenomenological concept of history on the eve of the second world conflagration, which definitively deprived Europe of world leadership. That war has made European science and technology the world's connecting tissue. But European civilization has turned into this precisely in that version that *The Crisis of European Sciences* showed to be decadent, since it has lost its meaning, i.e., that teleological idea able to confer a meaning which — according to Husserl — constitutes Europe's intimate and spiritual essence."[8] Immediately after the war, in September 1946, the philosophers and writers of the destroyed and impoverished continent met in Geneva to feel the pulse of the European spirit after the catastrophe.[9] Karl Jaspers, who delivered a moving speech, talked about an internally broken Europe, diminished *vis à vis* its two vanquishers, its new tutors, who observe it from outside "with admiration and disgust, with love and hate."[10] Its status was now that of a museum, which retains the historical memory of the West at its beginning, not unlike what classical Greece had become much earlier. Yet, Europe's "idea," expanding to America and to Russia, tended to become universalized, no longer as the idea of Europe, but rather of the

5. Paul Valéry, "Note sulla Grandezza e la Decadenza dell'Europa" (1927), now in *Sguardi sul Mondo Attuale* (Milan: Adhelphi, 1994), pp. 29-35.

6. Edmund Husserl, *Erste Philosophie*, Vol. I (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), p. 283.

7. Edmund Husserl, *La Crisi delle Scienze Europee e la Fenomenologia Trascendentale* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1961). This work was written in the mid-1930s.

8. Jan Patocka, *Saggi Eretici sulla Filosofia della Storia* (Bologna: CSEO, 1981), p. 77.

9. See Benda, *et al., L'esprit Européen, Recontres internationales de Geneve, 1946* (Neuchatel: Edition De la Baconniere, 1947).

10. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

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West, prefiguring the possibility of a new world order. The coming Cold War would soon force even philosophers to take sides. Confronted with the communist threat, one group uncritically identified itself with "Atlantic" politics, while another, no less determined, opted for the Soviet side, now controlling various countries in Central and Eastern Europe.[11]

At that time, philosophical discussions concerning Europe as a political and cultural entity were suspended for over forty years. Where there seemed to be two Europes, in fact there were none. The nations of the old continent organized themselves politically and economically into two separate and contraposed spheres, which threatened each other with war and extermination. Western European unity, conditioned by the need for aid and the American military umbrella, found its limited realization in a Common Market, which allowed economic recovery, while in the East socialist "internationalism" sought to destroy the memory of traditional life-styles and European culture. Only the gradual delegitimation of the Soviet Empire and the fall of the Berlin Wall made it possible for Europeans to re-think their condition in continental terms.

The Conversion of an Anti-European

Only after 1989 did a philosophical discussion concerning Europe begin once again, registering the meaning of the historical turn that had taken place.[12] Particularly important here is Edgar Morin's experience, described in *Penser l'Europe*, published in 1987, which anticipates this reborn European sensibility.[13] "For many years, I have been an anti-European. At the end of the war, at the beginning of the rise of the federalist European movements during anti-fascism, I wrote an article published in 1946 in *Les Lettres Françaises* with the unappealing title: 'There is no Europe anymore.' I had fought in the Resistance and at that time I was a

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11. This was true of Antonio Banfi, a philosopher tied to the great tradition of European thought, from Simmel to Husserl, who, in the early 1950s, saw not only two Europes, but two humanities developing along different paths: "Western man is thrown back to the past, reaction, evasion and an inner contradiction; Soviet man toward the future, collective and technical ways of doing things, toward an ever greater organicity." See Antonio Banfi, "L'Unité Dialectique de la Civilisation Moderne," in *Comprendre*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1951), pp. 82-102. The original text can be found in Antonio Banfi, *La Ricerca della Realtà* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1976), Vol. II, p. 759.

12. For writings concerning the possibility of re-thinking Europe in the years before 1989, see Luigi Bonanate, "Il Lamento della Democrazia d'Europa," in Luciano Canfora, ed., *Idee di Europa* (Bari: Dedalo, 1997), pp.104-105.

13. Edgar Morin, *Pensare l'Europa*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988). Cf. also the second French edition, revised and completed in 1990 (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

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communist. For me, for us, Europe was a lie."[14] The essence of European "humanism" had become well-known during the history of conquests and colonization. European democracies remained exposed by the fact that some European countries were still colonial powers. Hence, his choice of "humanity," over Europe — the choice of the universal and the "global." Even during the 1960s, Morin asked, "why be Europeans, when today we live in an extremely restricted global space-time?" In the following decade, however, when the old fallen continent appeared in all its fragility, no longer a subject but now an object and the play of two opposed imperialisms, threatened by the 1973 energy crisis, he experienced a first "reawakening of Europe": "I have become a neo-European, because I have seen a sick Europe and the general proof of its agony . . . My European consciousness is not the result of European prosperity, and I do not seek mainly European economic development in the world. It is a result of what Patocka calls 'the misery of the fall,' 'from the ultimate viewpoint of this situation in which we are threatened by obscurity.' This called for *rethinking Europe* and for considering our *common destiny* before prefiguring a community."[15] In those years, the common destiny Morin wanted people to become aware of was still the threat of nuclear extermination, which had hung over Europe, by the absurdity and at the same time the inability of overcoming the dilemma of extermination or subjugation to totalitarianism; and finally, by the need to respond to passive nihilism, which favored living only for the moment, searching for well-being, in order to avoid looking into incipient Nothingness. All of this had led him to reflect on the meaning of tradition, culture, European life, and what could be destroyed forever.

Jan Patocka: Philosopher and Witness

Recent reflections concerning the idea of Europe[16] along Morin's lines, have a precedent. Since the height of the Cold War, a Czech philosopher, Jan Patocka, had gone back to inquire into the genealogy of Europe: what had sustained it and the reasons for its collapse. Outside a circle of a few intellectuals who attended his private, semi-clandestine seminars in Prague during the 1970s, and those who could read "*samizdat*" literature in Czech, his works, which pick up themes already broached in the period between the

14. Morin, *Pensare L'Europa*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
16. See especially Jacques Derrida, *L'Autre Cap Suivi de la Democratie Ajournée* (Paris, Minuit, 1991), and Massimo Cacciari, *Geo-Filosofia dell'Europa* (Milan: Adelphi, 1994); and *L'Arcipelago* (Milan: Adelphi, 1997).

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two world wars, remained virtually unknown until after his death (1977).

Having studied in Paris and Freiburg (where he was particularly close to Husserl and attended Heidegger's courses), during the last 30 years of his life Patocka was under the control of a political power seeking to destroy the old Europe and its philosophy. There were two exceptions: during the Prague Spring, in which he participated; and during the obscure years that followed, when Patocka decided to follow his ideas to the end by openly opposing the intimidation which had subjugated Czech society and once again brought the country back to the "normality" of an imperial province. Actually, Patocka became one of the most visible leaders of "Charter 77," and his sudden (and for many, unexpected) political engagement during the last months of his life (early 1977) led to exhaustive police interrogations, which brought about his demise.[17]

Patocka's reflections concerning the philosophical idea of Europe and European civilization culminated in his *Heretical Essays.* This historical vision is intermingled with an exegetical and critical reflection concerning the thinking of his two main teachers, Husserl and Heidegger, which led to an original re-thinking of the entire phenomenological problematic. The seminar on *Plato and Europe*, which was taped and subsequently distributed as a *samizdat*, contains substantial chunks of his philosophy of the natural world, of the *epoché,* and of man as a "being of manifestation." Other writings dealing with political philosophy, published in French,[18] contain extensive discussions of European civilization and its current status.

17. On Jan Patocka's life and death (1907-1977), see Roman Jakobson, "Le Curriculum Vitae d'un Philosophe Tcheque," appended to the French translation of *Saggi Eretici*, tr. by Erika Abrams (Lagrasse: Edition Verdier, 1981), with an "Introduction" by Paul Ricoeur. Also relevant is an autobiographical interview (1967) entitled "Sulla Filosofia e i Filosofi" (pp. 163-183), published as an appendix to the Italian translation of the same work by Gianlorenzo Pacini, with an introduction by Vaclav Belohradsky. For a presumably complete bibliography of works by and about Patocka, see Jiri Nemec and D. Souceck, eds. *Bibliografie 1928-1996. Jan Patocka* (Prague: Edice Oikumene, 1997). A bibliography just of Patocka's works put together by Ivan Chvatik and a bibliographical note by Martin Cajthaml appear as appendices to M. Cajthaml and Guiseppe Girgenti's Italian translation of *Plato and Europe* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997), ed. and with an "Introduction" by Giovanni Reale. Patocka's *Collected Works* in their original language are presently being prepared for publication in the Czech Republic (already preceded by "samizdat editions). A German edition of *Selected Works* has been published in 5 volumes by Klett-Cotta, beginning in 1987, edited by the Vienna "Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen." There are many French translations of individual works. A selection of essays has been translated into English and published as appendices to Erazim Kohak, *Jan Patocka. Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

18. Jan Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice. Ecrits Politiques*, ed. by Jerome Millon, tr. by Erika Abrams, with a postface by Anne-Marie Roviello (Grenoble, 1990).

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Super-Civilization and its Heirs

Since the early 1950s, Patocka did not have any illusions about post-war Europe. The division of the continent into two contraposed fronts reflected a deep crisis of this rationalizing super-civilization that had imposed itself on all others through conquest and by disintegrating them from within.[19] The hegemony of old European culture and its liberal tradition was still alive in the Western world, but it had been undermined by a revolutionary radicalism that was also a legitimate heir of European history. The universal nature of Western rationality clashed with its geopolitical location, i.e., with the centrality of Europe. This contradiction that Leninism had transformed into a real conflict seemed to leave no alternatives. Europe had to go beyond itself and self-destruct in order to produce a universal history.[20]

Twenty years later, Patocka tackled this problem once again in his Prague seminars, and reiterated his first impressions at the beginning of the Cold War. Europe has reached "the end of its rope" and is being undermined by the same forces of science and technology that had given her world supremacy. This destruction had repercussions around the world, and there were forces "that will not allow Europe to become once again what she had been in the past."[21] Europeans themselves had accepted the end of Europe as a given, and had embraced the viewpoint and life-style of her heirs.

But the collapse of European civilization concerns not only Europeans, but the whole world. The continuity between Europe and the rest of the world involves science, technology, and formal rationality, but it does not erase the diversities of local traditions. Thus, in the post-colonial era, a pluralistic world has come into being full of power struggles devoid of substance or any common denominator.[22] The danger ahead, which flies in the face of more optimistic perspectives, lies precisely in that aspect which already has proven to be self-destructive for Europe. "Europe does not exist anymore as a hegemonic force. But the spirit that produced it remains and it is trying to conquer humanity. . . . Non-European populations seem eager to acquire this spirit as a remedy against impoverishment,

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19. Jan Patocka, "La Supercivilisation et Son Conflict Interne," in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 99ff.

20. *Ibid.*, pp.135 and 137.

21. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, tr. by Erika Abrams (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1983), p. 17.

22. Jan Patocka, "Le Fondements Spirituels de la Vie Contemporaine" (1969), in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 215ff. and 223-224.

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deprivation and disease." However, they risk "becoming victims of an even worse misery that erupts into mass repression."[23]

From this viewpoint, Patocka's questions are the following: has Europe any options and can Europe reformulate its identity? Europe means more than just the continent. Patocka's proposes to investigate both the origin of European culture and its modern developments.[24] European culture has meant a turning point for humanity and has had produced major consequences for the rest of the world. Patocka wants to find out whether European culture, beyond its technological heritage, does not conceal another heritage, the capacity to be a "planetary soul" for a world which is reduced to a mere instrumental body. The instrumental concept of natural and human reality places man in extreme danger: the "loss of the soul," i.e., his relation with himself and others. "The man with a soul is not just one that has a sense of the other in his poverty and visible misery; the man with a soul understands the mystery of the whole." The man of the new colossal and global era will "remain the same" — a being who gambles on the opening to the world in order to conquer the rising contradictions.[25] Greek philosophy first tackled this problem and called it 'the *care of the soul*.'

European Philosophy and the Natural World

European civilization is traced back to the simultaneous birth, in ancient Greece, of *philosophy* and *political life,* and thus to the beginning of *history.* Patocka's interpretation is indebted not only to his two Freiburg teachers, but also to Hannah Arendt's philosophy. The general result (as it emerges primarily in *Heretical Essays*) is, however, a decisively original account of the meaning of European history and its present. The key here lies in the relation between philosophy and the "natural world." The notion of *natural world*, which engaged Patocka his whole life,[26] derives from a critical transformation of Husserl's notion of the "lifeworld." According to Patocka, the natural world must be understood as the pre-historical world,

23. Jan Patocka, "Reflexion sur l'Europe" (early 1970's), in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp.181ff and 211.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

26. Patocka dedicated his very first essay, published in Prague in 1936, to the "natural world"; see his *Le monde naturel comme problème philosophique* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976). A more mature account of the same theme can be found in the essays collected in Jan Patocka, *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988). See also Renato Cristin's review of the second volume of Patocka's selected works in German, *Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. Phänomenologische Schriften* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), in *aut aut* 247 (1992), pp. 101ff.

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"the world before the discovery of its problematic character."[27] In this sense, the birth of philosophy implies an irreversible crisis for the "natural" form of human communities, in that this problem shakes their very foundations. In the natural world, man accepts a destiny imposed on him by higher powers, which implies total subordination to the life-cycle and to labor. Devoted exclusively to the conservation and reproduction of life, here *labor* does not generate history, but, rather, is an obstacle to historical life. Even when, in the evolved civilization of the great Asiatic empires, the production of permanent structures is differentiated from common laboring routine,[28] care for the simple maintenance of life remains dominant and keeps human existence short of the properly historical dimension.[29]

This servile condition of pre-historical humanity corresponds to a self-understanding which guarantees a sure, but limited sense of human life: to *mythical consciousness*, existence appears as given and unchangeable, imposed by superior entities, while knowledge and truth appear as a domain where men are not admitted.[30] Men must be satisfied with a limited, traditional knowledge not founded on an actual consciousness, on a "seeing," but on a story whose origin and authority trace back to an immemorable past. Their need for certainty is thus satisfied by answers which "precede the question"[31] and which, with their reassuring force, based on the authority of tradition, represent a brake to the raising of radical problems.

The Birth of Philosophy

With respect to this mythical knowledge, philosophy is "an altogether new possibility for the human spirit": not a new step in a necessary development, but something unpredictable: "*a possibility which could have remained unrealized and which most humanities, even highly civilized ones, do not know.*"[32] This new possibility implies an autonomous departure from the orientation exclusively concerned with the past and from the contamination of real experience with the mythical imagination, in order to access the dimension of the actual present of the given world. "Here, *self-manifestation*, which from the viewpoint of myth is the domain of the gods, where man does not go unless he goes out of his way, becomes

27. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51ff. and elsewhere, Patocka refers to Hannah Arendt's analyses of *Vita Activa*.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
30. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 and 65.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 68. Italics added.

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something which is not only narrated, but *is there*, with all the force of a stupefying presence." Confronted with the world as a whole, lack of clarity is transformed into a questioning attitude: "what is all this?" "From then on, the givenness of the world becomes the problem of philosophy."[33]

Citing Arendt, Patocka sees the simultaneous advent of philosophy, political life and history coming about when life ceases to have only itself and its cyclical reproduction as an end, i.e., when a public dimension making possible the reciprocal recognition of being equal and free comes about — above and beyond the "unfreedom of the primordial generative circle." This is a recognition which must be verified ever anew on the basis of personal "virtues," in a life which is not afraid of risk and is full of tensions and new departures. This active life re-grounds and provides a new sense even to what remains passive. "Political life draws its free potentiality from the household and domestic labor, but, in turn, the household cannot exist without the *polis*, which not only protects it, but gives it a meaning."[34] It is a life based on courage and resistance, on warring virtues, which defend free life as such. It is now a matter of a life in the open, which no longer benefits from external protections or from mythical guarantees. Because of the absence of such protections, it is also open to the meaning of the world as a whole, which now presents itself immediately, i.e., without the mediation of tradition and mythical narrative.

Answers which anticipate the questions no longer work: the pre-existing meaning of life becomes problematic. "When life is renewed, everything appears under a different light; free man no longer has blinders over his eyes, but not because he now sees new things, but because he sees them in a different way. It is like a countryside struck by lightening, where he is alone, without supports, condemned to be satisfied with what presents itself to him and what appears is the whole without exceptions; it is exactly the instant of the creative dawn, the 'first day of creation,' enigmatic and all the more attractive because of the fact that it embraces, brings within itself and drags along the shocked man. This renovation of the meaning of life, which brings about political life, also contains the germ of philosophical life."[35] Thus, philosophy is born out of stupor, as Plato and Aristotle claimed, but out of a new kind of stupor, which is not like surprise at or curiosity about the peculiarity of things, but like a telluric shock, which shakes the ground of mythical certainties. It signals "the

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
34. Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

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shift from an attitude of unreflected faith to one in which faith is suddenly tested, because something moves and things are given words."[36]

Now, this shock at the threshold of the very problematicization of European culture never stops reproducing itself and re-occurs ever anew against the obviousness of everyday life and its "myths." In fact, the birth of philosophy and the beginning of historical existence cannot mean a definitive break with the natural world and mythical consciousness. "We always live in myth, for the simple reason that we live in the natural world."[37] In this broader sense, the natural attitude is no longer simply something belonging to the domain of pre-historical humanities, but, as in both Husserl and Heidegger, characterizes everydayness and obviousness: the fundamental framework of those same historical civilizations. The transformation that renders "natural" existence "historical" does not suppress elementary life-dynamics — its regeneration and the welcoming of those who enter the human world, in work, organization and in the struggle in defense of life[38] — even if it modifies them and their general meaning. In the same way, the birth of philosophy neither suppresses nor renders superfluous the mythical dimension, as assumed by the positivistic doctrine of "stages." Myth is the spontaneous structuration of existence, according to the fundamental articulations of good and evil, day and night: it is an opposition in which the concrete forms of human life are articulated. "We cannot live without this opposition. And there is a whole series of similar pairs of contraries. The *problem of the mythical world*, i.e., of life, is *the relation between these two contraries*, the extrication of the relation between these two terrible forces, the one which welcomes us in the world and the one which shakes us and always places us in danger."[39]

Man as the "Being of Manifestation"

Within this double notion of the natural world, even the birth of philosophy takes on a double meaning: as an historical event which took place in ancient Greece, marking the origin of Europe and the West, and at the same time as a constant resurgence of stupor in relation to the "fact" of being and of the way it presents itself. Philosophy must constantly be reborn, in the same way that the natural world with its obviousness and its

36. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
38. On the "dynamics of human existence," evoked in *Heretical Essays* and other writings, see especially *Le monde naturel et le mouvement de l'existence humaine*, *op. cit.*
39. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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daily myths is constantly regenerated. Now, in contrast with the obviousness of the natural world, this notion of an irrepressible stupor is directly related to another key phenomenological notion: the *epoché*. This implies radicalizing Husserl's concept along Heideggerian lines: in terms of the idea of a "step backward" *vis-à-vis* being, based on the relation of man and being.[40] This means that it must be understood not so much or even primarily as a deliberate philosophical exercise, but as an existential shock, of an overwhelming, emotive situation which eliminates every compromise with everyday mediocrity and reveals human existence in its finitude, thus exposing it to its possibilities of transcendence. According to Patocka's development of this Heideggerian insight, the comprehension of being as such in its difference with mere being or the comprehension of the *phenomenon* of *appearing* as contraposed to the things that appear is based on this exposure.[41]

What the birth of philosophy reveals is precisely this *difference*, whereby man becomes aware of himself as the *being of manifestation*.[42] "Everyday life continually flows in light of the manifestation. Yet, *the manifestation as such does not interest us*. What interests us are things. . . ." Only for philosophy does it become decisive to follow this to the end, which makes possible truth and error, and man as the only being able to distinguish good from evil, to relate to the nature of beings.[43] Thus, man is the locus of appearance, whose meaning can be caught only through that transcendence beyond things, which is disclosed through the phenomenological *epoché*. In its negativity, it reveals the radical *freedom* man can achieve in relation to being.[44] At the crossroad between being

40. See Jan Patocka, "Les Périls de l'Orientation de la Science vers la Technique selon Husserl et l'Essence de la Technique en tant que Péril selon Heidegger," in *Les Cahiers de Philosophie* 11-12 (1990), pp. 29-30.

41. On Patocka's interpretation of the essential themes of phenomenology (*epoché*, "asubjective" phenomenology, etc.) see Jan Patocka, *Qu'est-ce que la Phénoménologie?* (Grenoble: Millon, 1988). Cf. also his *Introduction à la phénoménologie de Husserl* (Grenoble: Millon, 1988).

42. The phenomenon, the manifestation, even if it is manifestation of something, is not in turn a being which could be deduced from the structure of real being. See Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 39; manifestation as such is absolutely originary and entirely independent of the structure of real things. Thus, as Patocka explains, it is not even a "lived" experience, which would have its reality in absolute consciousness, taking its distance from Husserlian phenomenology. Rather, it is an apriori, which operates anonymously, and it is in its light that things appear even if it is ignored. On the concept of an asubjective phenomenology, see Patocka, *Qu'est-ce la Phénoménologie?*, *op. cit.*

43. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

44. Patocka, *Les Périls de l'Orientation*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

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and phenomenon, man participates in the contingency of the real universe. But, at the same time, he is the only being able to access this aspect of non-reality, which is manifestation. He is the only being capable of truth. Yet, this privilege is also a curse, as transpires through a whole series of myths, from the Biblical myth of the tree of knowledge to that of Gilgamesh or that of Oedipus. The transgression into the context of truth, a context reserved for the gods, leads to the awareness of the desperate situation in which man finds himself.

Greek philosophy seeks to provide an answer to this tragic awareness, which manifests itself through mythical consciousness by transforming the human predicament into a life project, i.e., by turning the phenomenon as such, the "glance into what is," into the program of his existence — something which allows him to participate in divine life, despite his finitude. This implies a fundamental conversion, a disposition to turn truth into the law governing his life and his world. "*Man is, or at least in some circumstances he can make the human world into a world of truth and justice.*"

The "Care of the Soul"

This project coincides with the idea, which has remained the spiritual basis of European life, of the *care of the soul*. In fact, the *soul* is "that to which things show themselves as they are." We are able to show ourselves to ourselves, on condition that we understand our being as based on this phenomenon of appearing, thus on truth, on condition that we take charge of it. "Because he is between the phenomenon and being as such, man can either *fall* and thus *lower himself to the level of a simple being*, or realize himself as a *being of truth, a being of the phenomenon.*"[45]

This is the thought underlying Europe and which permeates its whole history up to the beginning of modern history. It is a thought which, from the very beginning, both in Democritus as well as in Plato, expresses a vision of the soul profoundly different from previous versions for which the soul was primarily an image, a being *for the other*. In order to survive, this soul needed a corporeal wrapping or a written expression. Even in the myths of rebirth, what "returns" is the visible form of what nature regenerates, thus once again the *soul for the other, not my own*. "My own soul appears for the first time in Democritus and Plato. It is the soul that lives in contact with the eternal. The fact that in Democritus it lives for a short time is not important, since the contact with the eternal is identical in both

45. *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 45

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man and divinity — the divine is nothing other than this contact. Even this soul, in a certain sense, is eternal, even though it disintegrates into the atoms that compose it."[46]

Patocka defends himself from the suspicion of idealism. By claiming that the philosophy of the care of the soul, as defined in classical Greece, will remain the specific trait of European life, his element of continuity, he does not pretend that the ideas of philosophy have been realized in Europe, nor "that philosophy is the world's moving force, or that it has the possibility of becoming it." As already indicated, philosophy abolishes neither the mythical element nor non-philosophical praxis, which is constantly regenerated in the natural attitude of everyday life. "Even after the awakening brought about by the development of reflection, men continue to fall asleep, they go back to live in myth. . . . But the fact remains that from the time philosophy came into being, even non-philosophical life finds itself obliged to come to terms with it in some way, to reflect and thereby to assimilate some elements of philosophy."[47]

The Relation with Non-Philosophy

Thus, the relation to non-philosophy, to existence which operates on the basis of obviousness and daily mythology, remains (and will remain) problematic. Early on, philosophy runs into conflict with the community. In a particularly critical phase of Athenian democracy, Socrates upsets both the traditionalists' uninvestigated certainties and the cynicism of the "moderns." Encouraging his interlocutors to overcome simple opinions in order to *take a look at what is*, he contraposes the evidence of what manifests itself "in presence" to the bad present of what appears obvious according to predominant views. By upholding the ancient principle forbidding doing harm to others, the principle whereby it is better to suffer an injustice rather than commit it, Plato's Socrates "defends the old with *new means*"; he seeks to solidify what is based on a lasting knowledge, at the same time bringing to light the tyrannical tendencies of the democracy of his time. This search for truth concerning what is good, a search which wants to reach its objective through the criticism of opinions, is that of the "care of the soul" that Plato will develop in the three directions of a general vision of being; a project for a rational state; and an investigation concerning the essence of the soul itself.[48]

46. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 98 and 117, 140.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 119ff.

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This project, this aspiration to embody the eternal in time, to "stay the course in the hurricane of the times," is related to the catastrophe of Athenian political life, the curse that has befallen the city since Socrates, the wisest and most just of all men, has been condemned to death. Plato's *Republic* is the project of a community in which a just man can live and in which the care of the soul can be pursued — the principle of a life based on the glance over what is. With this, Greek philosophy prefigures what will become the idea of Europe. And Europe's specificity lies in the fact that "philosophy is born *only in Europe*, in the sense of that awakening through which man frees himself from tradition in order to enter into the present of the universe — only in Europe or more precisely in what has been the germ of Europe — in Greece."[49]

This "awakening to the present" that is philosophy reproduces itself in an always difficult or conflictual relation with non-philosophical life, with the world of everyday obviousness which, as already indicated, is not overcome, but is forced to explain itself to the point of taking on some aspects of philosophy.[50] This transpired even within the hard and inflexible reality of the Roman Empire, when the Stoics reactivated the Platonic program in the sense of a humanity formed according to universal principles. Even later, the idea of a Christian community which presents itself as the Kingdom of God on earth, based on the absolute truth of "another world," is inconceivable without Platonic premises: it is always the same legacy which reasserts and renews itself throughout all the catastrophes of history.This is what authorizes locating the origins of Europe in the care of the soul. Diverging from current opinion that grounds European culture on two elements, the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian, Patocka holds the thesis of *one foundation*: "Europe is ground only on *one base*, because Europe is . . . a life founded on the glance over what is," while the Judeo-Christian element has been able to exert all its weight only by Hellenizing itself and absorbing from the Platonic tradition the same idea of a true world and of a divinity identified with pure goodness.[51]

Modern Europe and its Realizations

Europe was born out of the care of the soul, and "died because she allowed it to veil itself once again in oblivion."[52] The new face with which

49. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 99 and 118.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

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Europe presented itself at the beginning of modernity, in the 16th century, is described in *Heretical Essays* as the victorious imposition of the care of having, of the will to dominate that began with the mad dash for the riches of the New World, was confirmed with the secularization of sacred praxis following the Protestant Reformation and, finally, with the new Baconian and Cartesian concepts of science, which identified knowledge with power, and sought to make man the lord of nature. The capitalist organization of production developed within this framework, while the new states which marginalized the medieval unity of the Holy Roman Empire, organized themselves as the weapons of competitive and hostile communities, which never succeeded in developing unifying principles.[53] This is how that dialectic unfolds: the "European concert" became the nucleus of continental and world-wide imperialisms, dug its own grave in the wars of this century, and thereby caused Europe to disappear from the world-scene.

The Modernist Turn

In this turn marked by the coming of European modernity, what is decisive, is the role of science and technology — activities made possible by that same "glance over what is" that gave rise to philosophy and the care of the soul, but that in modern Europe asserted themselves according to a principle of universality altogether different from and antithetical to that of ancient philosophy. Here it is a matter of a pragmatic, formal-mathematical universality, which privileges practical efficacy and domination over comprehension, and increasingly marginalizes the metaphysical tradition. In England and in part of the Western continent, "the union of industry, technology and organization brings about the explosion of the technological revolution, from which the attack on the world's wealth takes on a new meaning: the creation of an enormous technological-military patrimony, to which the extra-European world has nothing similar to oppose."[54] This scientificity is no longer concerned with self-understanding and self-responsibility, but with the accumulation of power, whose objective is exclusively efficacy, i.e., domination of everything that presents itself as the factual.

But, as Husserl had written, from a simple science of facts only a "humanity of facts" can come into being. The predominance of the technological spirit does not mean, as for Husserl, merely a downgrading of philosophical intentionality into a "tired" humanity, but must be seen, as with Heidegger, in its obsessive positivity as a specific mode of understanding,

53. *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

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as an alternative modality of the "Einsicht in das, was ist.[Insight into that, which is.]"[55] It is a mode of understanding no longer rooted in the "natural world" (Husserl's lifeworld), which "resolves" the latter into a network of relations within which mundane beings lose their particularity. Now, their being is defined by their function more than by their perseverance in the world.[56] But man's sense of being is also transformed along with that of things and of nature. It also becomes only a function, a component of a new "universal." It is a matter of what Heidegger called "*Gestell*," i.e., that provoking intimation which captures the essence of modern technology: it "does not allow anything to subsist as what it is, but extracts from it what it wants" and configures each thing in view of an efficient use.[57]

This generates a process of universal unveiling. The human environment becomes transparent and available as never before, and man becomes a "universal" and "global" being. At the same time, this universal unveiling occludes, as never before, what makes it possible and transcends its dimension — the appearing, unveiling as such — and thus man's very relation to truth, which is occluded by the predominance of particular, practical "truths" of a practical order.[58]

This pragmatic efficacy and this ability to take on global dimensions made European civilization into a "super-civilization" different from previous ones, each of which had developed as a world apart, according to specific principles that obliged men to identify themselves with particular myths and traditions, while "what characterizes Europe as Europe is the fact that its specific principle is generality." The other civilizations' ability to generalize themselves usually meant the expansion of a tradition at the expense of others, which perpetuated their reciprocal strangeness.[59] For its part, European civilization "has assumed as foundation the *vision*,

55. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-9. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "La Questione della Tecnica," in *Saggi e Discorsi*, ed. by Gianni Vattimo (Milan: Mursia, 1976), pp 5-27, especially pp. 14ff. "*Gestell*" (which Vattimo translates as im-position) is not, writes Patocka, a technical entity either naturally, socially or otherwise: "it is a mode of understanding what is — the mode in which things and the world appear in our days." Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

59. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-5. Of course, even Europe is based on its own traditions, such as the Christian and the one of classical literature; but "the glance over what is remains the most characteristic trait of European civilization, what makes possible its generalization, . . . technology, techniques, etc. The fact that all life problems are defined from the viewpoint of this glance over what is and the possibility of the logical development that follows conditions the specific form of European civilization." *Ibid.*, p. 235.

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the intuition in the sense of looking at what is." In the modern world this means primarily technology's pragmatic efficacy, with its specific ability of universal penetration: "everyone understands European civilization, because its principle is — roughly — two plus two equals four."

These differentiating characteristics that distinguish European civilization as a "*unicum*" with respect to other cultures do not justify its pretended superiority.[60] Rather, the most outstanding characteristic is its abstractness — an abstractness Europeans themselves have often perceived as "something which is not in order, as if it concealed a hidden 'wound'."[61] This is a wound over which Patocka devotes some pages of "reflection on Europe," going back to the early 1970s.

Disillusions of the Realization

Patocka is not willing to give European culture the credit it usually attributes to itself: its openness to other cultures. Even the Husserlian attempt of locating the universal apriori of the lifeworld common to all cultures does not succeed: the "new science" of the lifeworld challenges the scientistic objectivism of the "European" sciences, but it also remains in turn an abstraction within which the mystery of the world is lost — the originary soil over which the elementary movements of human existence are produced. "Until such a foundation, common to all forms of humanity, no matter how different, will be brought out of oblivion, no effective dialogue among the various 'cultures' and 'humanities' will be possible, because it will never start out from what is common, but every time from a specific element which will be passed along as the universal. Husserl himself succumbs to this temptation when he presents the ideal of European *ratio* as humanity's universal *entelechi*." As the last link of a chain of typically European visions of other cultures, the Husserlian doctrine continues to presuppose the "necessity" of the European principle, i.e., with respect to the "contingency" of other principles, the superior value of its rational universality. This approach does not provide a common framework within which human communities can understand each other. In fact, by colonizing other civilizations, Europe does not encounter the desert, but rather "a terrain already worked over, an already formed world, both actively and passively" — forgotten traditions which demand to be appreciated in all of their originality and autonomy.[62]

60. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 211.
61. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.
62. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 197 and 212.

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Thus, even in its most refined philosophies, the predominance of European universal rationality unfolds as "the generalized extenuation of the mystery of the world," of that component of what is called the "world," which never allows itself to be reduced to the controllable present and which in "primitive" cultures had taken the form of myth.[63] By systematically struggling against this dimension and by substituting everywhere rational structures of domination, "European" rationality not only destroys other forms of humanity, but hides from itself the uncontrollable element that also determines its hyper-technologized world. "This struggle is nothing but a testimony of the paradoxical presence-absence of what we resist."[64]

Greek philosophy had discovered the problems threatening the certainties of the mythical world. Its "glance into what is" presupposed and cultivated the astonishment and the world's enigmatic character. But the "glance" of the age of technology impoverishes all enigma. A phenomenology of modern everyday life registers everywhere the "disillusionment that today accompanies the actualized realization of humanity's oldest dreams." Bacon's *regnum hominis* is becoming reality: it is possible to "impose any form on whatever substratum." The transmutation and manipulation of being can rely on enormous amounts of accumulated and always available energy. But what from Bacon to Marx had been dreamt of as the *regnum hominis* turns out to be a *regimen hominum* — domination over man, where what rules is an anonymous power, the accumulation of energy as such, "the power" men are unable to control and which, rather, everyone is ready to serve. The result of this process of senseless accumulation and dissipation of earthly and cosmic energies is "a massive production of human life, which risks provoking a disequilibrium between this factor and the reserves of the planet's raw materials, hitherto regarded as inexhaustible. The accumulation of energy goes on following the pace of an elementary power, taking advantage of tensions among various human groups in order to imagine and to increase ever more their

63. The objection, raised by an interlocutor, that not even extra-European cultures are immobile, nor do they draw exclusively from myth, Patocka answers: "Of course, man is a historical being, and every civilization is, in its own way, historical, and that they all evolve. But history as a *continuum* articulated in the way we are accustomed — in antiquity, the Middle Ages, etc. — is something specifically European, which we project on other civilizations. We measure them according to these European phases and cannot do otherwise." In this sense, "history" becomes identified with the history of Europe, imposed with violence on civilizations for which "history, in the described sense, does not exist initially, spontaneously." Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 235.

64. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-97.

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concentration." [65] And in order to constantly drag men from the factory to the front and vice versa, according to the unstoppable logic described by Patocka in his essay on 20th century wars.[66]

Social Utopias and Marxism

Similar to the utopia of the *regnum hominis*, to be achieved through scientific and technological progress, are the social utopias inspiring various versions of 19th century socialism, which gained new vigor and moral élan with the 1917 revolution. Even here, the dream of radical renewal, of a humanity freed from subjugation and misery, gave way to one of the most disappointing outcomes in history, that of a society exercising total control over itself, devoting an idolatrous cult to agencies of control and persecution. According to Patocka, no matter how degenerate the outcome may appear with respect to the initial project, it is still the outcome of the same dream. Marx' doctrine, which it needs for support, was born as a critical theory of society. It already contained the project of "converting a metaphysics — an interpretation of the mystery of the world on the basis of the concrete structures of being — into an empirically verifiable socio-historical process. Thus, it can be regarded as a theory of the abolition of philosophy through its realization, as a great example of the tendency seeking to substitute for the mystery the controllable and always disposable given structures of actual reality."[67]

From this viewpoint, Marx' outlook is *typically European*, in that it is permeated by the conviction of the superiority of European reason. At the same time, it is the only one that crosses the frontiers of European civilization and finds a broad following in extra- and post-European collectivities. In fact, it consists of "closing ranks *against* the European monopoly of power and capital, and *for* Europe's own outlook on life. Here, the rejection of Europe's colonial exploitation and the close adherence to European thought, the recognition of its supremacy, appear joined in the

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-99.

66. Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, p. 143. An English translation of this essay has appeared under the title "Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War," in *Telos 30* (Winter 1976-77), pp. 116-126. An analogous realization and trivialization "for the worse" engulfs all of humanity's other dreams, from the ability to fly through the air to the exploration of the extra-terrestrial universe, which lose their liberatory fascination and meaning with respect to terrestrial ties in order to reveal themselves as creations of ever new ties and as expectations of ever new accumulations of energies. "The internal void, which weights over the mystery left behind, constantly incorporates new deserts." See Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

67. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

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same program." The success of this program with extra-European societies is a function of the widespread belief that emancipation can come about only by means of science and technology, i.e., European rationality. But, in order to be realized, this program must be based on those aspects of indigenous traditions which best conform to the abstract ways of European rationality: the extreme differentiation between the social elite and the collectivized mass, and the violence entailed by this differentiation. "The result is a strange unprecedented mixture of Europe and what is non-European, which manipulates man on a scale unheard of, without any of the camouflage still in use in Europe, bringing these practices to such a perfection that, confronted with it, autoctonous spirituality risks becoming completely obscured."[68]

The phenomenology of the disappointing outcome of humanity's dreams touches also the most personal aspects of human existence, from the dream of immortality realized as the taboo of death and escape within the social ego "which does not die," to that of total individual happiness, trivialized in the fruition of what is immediately available, such as in the dominant vices of sexuality. All these are manifestations of modernity's profound blindness *vis-à-vis* the structures of human existence, of a "loss of the world" and of the original soil of existence never perceived as such.[69]

What is "What Saves"?

Despite all this, Patocka does not side with the philosophers of decline and resignation, nor with those of a simple "awaiting." Judgment concerning the present epoch and Western civilization must remain suspended.[70] This is not only because decadence is balanced by previously unknown possibilities in the struggle against misery and fatigue, but primarily because "civilization as such does not exist." It is not something that can be observed from outside, as a body rising or falling. The problem of civilization is our problem, that of knowing and deciding "whether historical man is still interested in recognizing himself in history."[71] In the midst of the shipwreck, Patocka remains focused on the signs of the time, asking what is still possible. His diagnosis of the technological era remains close to Heidegger's. The danger implicit in technology is in the fact that the

68. *Ibid.*, p. 203.
69. *Ibid.*, pp. 204-210.
70. See the essay "Why is Technological Civilization Decadent?" in Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
71. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-142.

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process of universal unveiling it sets in motion hides precisely the unveiling. By now man knows only single, practical truths, while Truth becomes inaccessible. Thus, he loses access to *his* truth as the agency through which this manifestation takes place.[72] But Patocka's attitude is very different when it comes to indicate "what saves."[73] The relation between comprehension which escapes and what it escapes *into* (clarity without shadows of the beings in which it flees) signals a struggle within being itself, a conflict whose resolution cannot merely be expected to come from above, a kind of *Gunst des Seins* obtaining in art. A solution can be approached only through yet another conflict "by confronting the danger head on," "by directly entering the struggle with the *Gestell*, in order to show, in this struggle, that its power is not absolute."[74]

Patocka does not regard this as a series of impossible or futile actions against the power of *Gestell*, or against arbitrary and anonymous power which constitutes its socio-political counter-figure;[75] but as a kind of retraction, a step back with respect to what power is based on: care for the maintenance of simple life and "daily" interests. Thus, what comes to the fore in the 1970s is a theme already explicit in earlier works: *sacrifice*.[76]

Freedom and Sacrifice

This theme, which became extraordinarily relevant because of Patocka's decision of "going to the end," up to "the overcoming of the tie which chains us to life," is an ethical radicalization of the question of "what saves"[77] and of the relation between philosophy and the natural world. Patocka thought that he could refer to a concrete and widespread,

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72. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

73. Patocka refers to Hölderlin's words: "Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / das Rettende auch" ("but where danger is grows also what saves") and Heidegger's interpretation in his essay on "The Question of Technology," *op. cit.*

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 265 and 284-85. Here it is proper to ask: "in reference to the Heideggerian project of a solution through art, whether the awaiting is not inadequate, whether it is necessary to confront the danger head on." On Patocka's concept of conflict, in connection with that of freedom, *epoché* and sacrifice, see Erika Abrams, "Avertissement," in Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 8. See also Anne-Marie Roviello, "Postface," in the same volume, pp. 367ff. concerning the nature of Patocka's "political" writings.

75. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-81

76. In this context, Roberto Esposito has referred to Patocka's 1953 essay "Le Platonisme Négatif," in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 53ff. From the same period see also "La Surcivilisation et son Conflit Interne," *op. cit.* pp. 149-50. Already in a 1946 essay "L'Idéologie et la Vie dans l'Idée," now in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 41ff., especially pp. 49-50, the theme of sacrifice is present in a sense very close to that of the last writings.

77. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-85.

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although not understood experience of the contemporary world. In the wars and revolutions of the 20th century, many millions of men have been sacrificed or they have willingly sacrificed themselves; but sacrifice as such, "one of the main experiences of our epoch." is something that completely escapes the consciousness typical of the technological age. From the latter's viewpoint, men and things are only equivalent realities, subject to deployment to increase Force, while he who sacrifices himself, beyond his specific and historical motivations, affirms a sense of being, the existence of something higher and of a hierarchy among entities, which rejects the universal leveling of all entities to simple usable material. "Thus, sacrifices constitute the persistent presence of what does not appear in the calculus of the technological world." The post-war world has sought to occlude this anguished specter of those who sacrifice themselves, by diving head-on in the spirit of technicity, whether the objective were (in a part of Europe) the endless growth of production and consumption (the various economic miracles) or (in another part) the development of technology in view of the continuation of the struggle. "Both agree in this submission [to what is technical], in a disharmonic, conflictual unity, whereby the process of global technology's domination, registers a permanent rise."[78]

When Europe seemed immobilized in "peace," while armed to the teeth, and the world of "really existing socialism" celebrated its reconquered normalization, Patocka saw signs of a renewed propensity to sacrifice as "the announcement of a transformation of the relation of man to truth." Here, he specifically meant members of the technological and scientific establishment, who had been entrusted with gigantic responsibilities and had seen themselves transformed into instruments of imperial power. Perceiving the vertigo of the uncontrollable forces they had been called upon to govern, they had experienced the collapse of their values, rejecting at great costs to continue serving the process of accumulation of Power. What he thought most relevant was also that these "heroes of our time"[79] could be found among the scientists of those countries which were the

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-73.

79. See "Les Héros de Notre Temps," in *ibid.*, especially p. 328, on "Oppenheimer, Sacharov: Repented Atomic Scientist": "They clearly see the insignificance of all present social projects, the coalitions, the maneuvers and the political calculations, compared to the possibilities available to technology that the 'powerful' are ridiculously convinced of being able to master. Having no other means to express their horror *vis à vis* this imbalance expressing the uncontrolled — and maybe uncontrollable — depth of man, who is able to do much more than he realizes, they sacrifice themselves, they reject their work and positions, their primary objectives, their values and ideals they had hitherto considered evident."

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"hypertrophic heirs" of European civilization: the US and the USSR. In their experience, sacrifice had lost its original mythical and religious sense, becoming the acknowledgment of a limitation inherent in the technological era. In the last pages of *Heretical Essays*, this conclusion turns into an appeal to the technological and scientific intelligentsia and to the solidarity of "all those who have lived through the collapse." This solidarity was not translated into positive programs, but "as Socrates' demon, in admonitions and prohibitions. It can and must create a spiritual authority and become a spiritual power which forces and restricts the warring world within certain confines." "It is necessary to shake the everydayness of people who live from facts and routines, make them aware that their place is on this side of the front, and not on the side of the day's more seductive slogans, which actually invite them to war, whether they refer to people, or state, or the abolition of classes, of world unity or of whatever else: all of these appeals can lose all credibility, or rather they have actually lost it because of the disdain with which Power treats them."[80]

According to Patocka, in the disenchanted reactivation of sacrifice, those concrete ties, which in the past motivated the more naive forms of voluntary sacrifice, are now transcended. He talks about a *radical sacrifice*, which has no positive content, but is rather a rejection of the predominant way of thinking. "To sacrifice oneself for something becomes a sacrifice for what 'is not' anything in particular or anything material . . . Thus sacrifice takes on a peculiarly radical and paradoxical configuration. It is not sacrifice for anything or for anyone, even though it is, in some way, a sacrifice for all and for everything. In a sense, it is a sacrifice for nothing, understood as what is not an entity." As such, radical sacrifice could become "the starting point of a shift in our understanding of the world and of life, able — beyond any romantic devaluation — to finally lead us back to ourselves and thus overcome the era of technological understanding, apparently very rich, but in reality so indigent in its essence."[81]

As already indicated, the predisposition to radical sacrifice presupposes the experience of *collapse*, i.e., of a shaking which — as the experience of the front in this century's wars[82] — takes those who experience it away from "everyday" motivations, and, while it takes away from Power its playing field, it generates a particular solidarity among those who have

80. Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-59.
81. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-75.
82. See Patocka, "Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War," *op. cit.*, pp. 143ff.

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suffered the *collapse*. Thus, radical sacrifice is an expression of *freedom* from the domination of entities, of an ability to see the *difference* between entities and what is not an entity.[83] In this understanding of sacrifice as opening to difference, Patocka managed to articulate the most profound features of his phenomenological philosophy. As already indicated, the *epoché* was not a simple philosophical exercise, but a liberatory movement entailing the experience of the collapse of the natural attitude, i.e., of the reasons of the simple life and of mere adjustment to it. The origins of philosophy, history, and political life, as well as their survival, are tied to the exercise of this freedom. This is what distinguishes the spiritual individual from simple intellectuals. "The spiritual individual will have to stop being afraid." "The spiritual individual who is able to sacrifice himself, to *see* the meaning of sacrifice, *cannot* be afraid of anything. The spiritual individual is obviously not a politician, he is not a political man in the current sense. He is not involved in the conflict that seeks to divide the world. Yet, he is political in another evident sense, and he cannot avoid being so, in that he throws into society's face and to everything around him the *non-evidence of reality*."[84] In 1969, Patocka spoke of a "mission" and a "duty" *vis à vis* all who have not yet acquired "the privilege of the fascination motivated by totality and being, by that primordial interest which is the source of all clarity. Here man becomes he who is sent to the world to testify to truth, to ascertain it with every one of his actions and with his whole behavior . . . in order to offer himself to things and to human beings as a soil upon which they can lay, and not in order to exploit it for his arbitrary interests."[85] Patocka asked nothing less of *spiritual men*,[86] and it is this disposition which he saw at the origin of the Europe of the care of the soul — the heritage which could and had to be taken up once again, and which contained the sense of hope.[87]

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83. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
84. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
85. *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-35.
86. See Patocka, "L'Homme Spirituel et l'Intellectuel," in *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, pp. 243ff.
87. The concluding words of "A Seminar Concerning the Technological Age" (in *ibid.*, pp. 277ff.) hint at the possibility of a positive turn at the acme of the world's dissipation and consummation: "We believe we have the right to exploit the whole world, those of us who exist now, without taking into account those who will come; we believe we have the right to use and abuse what the hard and unconscious labor of the suns and the moons has accumulated for billion of years. This right appears obvious, and we do not even ask for what all this waste takes place. . . this will be one of the fundamental moments of the change . . . humanity is entering a period in which it is beginning to repent and reflect . . . Maybe the technological age will see itself forced to transform itself if it does not want to perish, or, let us say, that it is capable of transformations" p. 324.

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As already indicated, Europe is on the agenda and maybe it "will be created." Eurodogmatism and Euroscepticism will continue to clash on economic and social questions. Still rare, however, are questions concerning *what is* Europe. It is not even altogether clear how the question is to be posed, or if it is to be posed at all. "It is symptomatic of our present situation," Patocka used to say with a certain disappointment, "that no one or almost no one deals with it, that instead everything is done to avoid this scrutinizing. There is unending talk about Europe in the political sense, but the question concerning what it really is and where it was born is overlooked. There is talk about European integration. But is Europe something that can be integrated? Is it a matter of a merely geographical or political concept?"[88] The answer to this question is obviously negative: "Europe is a concept based on *spiritual* foundations."

From the 1970s, when Patocka spoke these words, some events have taken place which have changed the epoch. But, if Patocka's insistent and stubborn reflection has not been a useless passion, today we have to ask: can it be said that the West's victory has restored a *spiritual foundation* for an integrated Europe? In order to claim this, one would have to overlook what Patocka wrote, already in the 1950s, concerning the crisis of the "super-civilization" and "moderatism," or of that Western political praxis which already at that time he accused of "moral somnolence."[89] At a time when his adversary, communist radicalism, still seemed to be sustained by strong ethical motivations, Patocka was inclined to give some credit to moderatism (and to the European tradition that it perpetuated) only on the condition that it would know how to convert itself into a new spirituality and ability to sacrifice, "in the sense of giving up any advantage or superfluous privilege" and of a concept of freedom which would not flatten out into a mere economic liberalism.[90] But the path chosen by the European West has been precisely that of self-oblivion and of the exclusive search for well-being, the accumulation of wealth hitherto unseen and unimagined, according to a logic that obeys the fascination of Power and that deepens "the abyss between the *beati possidentes* and those who on this planet rich in energy still die of hunger," regenerating in the long run the conditions of an endemic war, at home in this century, a war that cannot end.[91]

88. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
89. Patocka, *Liberté et Sacrifice*, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 119 and 149.
91. Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

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These last considerations, developed in *Heretical Essays*, along with those developed in Patocka's other works, mark an unbridgeable gap between his philosophical idea articulated within the narrow possibilities of his time and history, and what now manifests itself as "European consciousness." European culture's congenital inability to open up to what is not European, reconsidered within the present "state of the world," leads one to ask whether today's Europe does not continue to maintain an hypertrophic self-consciousness of its own Western destiny, whether European "specificity" were not to be located, as Morin wrote in 1987, in the dialogical ability of allowing contraries ("Western" principles and those which are not) to coexist more than in the one-sided exaltation of one principle only, both in an offensive and defensive role.[92]

This is why Patocka's idea of Europe cannot be vindicated as an ideological referent for any of the main positions presently competing to provide a physiognomy for the continent. Similarly, it cannot be read as a preemptive condemnation of any concrete project, emanated from the inaccessible heights of a philosophy and of an ethic of sacrifice, removed from the reality of common existence. Patocka knew that even historical-existential events and disruptions such as wars have not been and cannot spare men from the logic of the everyday; that "a continuous mobilization constitutes a *fatum* too difficult for the world to tolerate — a destiny hard to look in the eye in order to draw the consequences that clearly follow from it."[93] This does not make philosophy meaningless, philosophy that conceives of itself as transcendence and as sacrifice; philosophy does not annihilate the natural lifeworld, its logic and its myths, it does not put an end to the course of the world, but inserts itself into the historical texture attempting to pose determinate limitations. It "enters into a circle with all other human possibilities" and "leads non-philosophy to a degree and level different from those in which it found itself before reflection. The task of philosophy is nothing else. Philosophy is an idea which, as such, depends on the ability of individuals and epochs to understand what in philosophy is in question from the very beginning, of reconnecting itself to a certain tradition and, eventually, continuing and revitalizing it."[94]

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92. Morin, *Pensare l'Europa*, *op. cit.* See also Jacques Derrida, *Oggi l'Europa* (Milan: Garzanti, 1991), p. 55: "If I were to declare . . . that I see myself, *among other things*, as a European, it would mean to be, because of this very claim, more or less European? Obviously both."

93. Patocka, *Saggi Eretici*, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

94. Patocka, *Platon et l'Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79.

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Developing the Modern Concept of the Self: The Trial of Meister Eckhart

Ben Morgan

Histories of the Self

The self is a historical phenomenon. As Nietzsche pointed out, the forms of self now taken for granted are the product of an arduous and often violent development whose beginnings, in Nietzsche's accounts at least, predate Cesare Borgia.[1] Nietzsche is not the only figure to have attempted to write the history of the self. Max Weber and Norbert Elias immediately come to mind.[2] More recently, Charles Taylor has historicized modern Western identity (calling it "a function of a historically limited mode of self-interpretation . . . which had a beginning in time and space and may have an end");[3] Peter and Christa Bürger have published parallel accounts of the development of masculine and feminine subjectivities since the 17th century;[4] and, in *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault has reconstructed what he calls "technologies of the self," starting

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 14 vols. (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), Vol. 5, p. 291. For Nietzsche's comments on Cesare Borgia see Vol. 5, p. 117, Vol. 6, pp. 136, 229, and 251.

2. Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Vol. I (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920), pp. 17-206; Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, 2 vols. (Bern: Francke, 1969).

3. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 111.

4. Christa Bürger, *Diese Hoffnung, Eines Tages nicht mehr allein zu denken: Lebensentwürfe von Frauen aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996). Peter Bürger, *Das Verschwinden des Subjekts: Eine Geschichte der Subjektivität von Montaigne bis Barthes* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1998).

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with classical Greece and Rome, and working toward the Christian Middle Ages,[5] while, on a darker note, in *Discipline and Punish*, he charts the development of "technologies of the soul" in the 18th and 19th centuries.[6]

Common in these accounts is the issue of self-control. The modern subject is an individual who has learned to control his emotions and his passions, and has forged himself into a predictable and constantly self-monitoring agent, submitting, in Elias, to the discipline of the late medieval court, in Weber, to the discipline of Protestant sects, and, in Foucault, to the discipline of the army, the school, the penitentiary, and the factory. Indeed, in its most radical formulations, both the notion of psychology and the very idea of Cartesian self-awareness are products of this regime of self-monitoring and self-control. Cartesian self-reflexivity emerges as the product of the habits and the practices of self-control that individuals on the threshold of the modern age were increasingly forced to adopt.[7]

These histories problematize the concept of the subject. They point out that the most intimate aspects of self-experience are shaped historically, suggesting that the sense of intuitive self-awareness which, to stay with the German tradition, Dieter Henrich and Manfred Frank still consider to be an inevitable precondition of an individual's experience, is itself the product of learned behavior.[8] Where Jacques Derrida questions the idea of a unified subject on a logical level, arguing that the self's relation to itself "can only be *différance*, that is to say alterity, trace,"[9] a historical approach encourages a shift of focus from logical arguments to the study of a particular way of life and the forms of identity it brought forth.[10] It focuses

5. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, *The Use of Pleasure*, tr. by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1985); Vol. II, *The Care of the Self*, tr. by Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986).

6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, tr. by Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977), p. 30.

7. Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, Vol, II, *op. cit.*, pp. 372-378.

8. See Dieter Henrich, *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht* (Frankfurt a./M.: Klostermann, 1967); and "Subjektivität als Prinzip," in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, Vol. 46, Nr. 1 (1998), pp, 31-44; and Manfred Frank, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbsterkenntnis: Essays zur analytischen Philosophie der Subjektivität* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1991).

9. "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject: An interview with Jacques Derrida," in *Who Comes After the Subject*, ed. by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 100.

10. For a comparative approach to the history of selfhood, see *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. by Thomas P. Kasulis, with Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); *Self as Person in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. by Roger T. Ames, with Wimal Dissanayake and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994); and *Self as Image in Asian Theory and Practice*, ed. by Roger T. Ames with Thomas P. Kasulis and Wimal Dissanayake (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1998).

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attention to the lived identities that people in different epochs and different cultures have constructed collectively. This changes the agenda. Logical questions about the inevitability or impossibility of intuitive self-presence now seem less meaningful than the reconstruction of the way of life behind arguments. Theoretical considerations give way to more practical or ethical questions regarding what is at stake in the way of life and the form of identity under discussion. Studying the history of the modern self thus means embarking on a moral, ethical or behavioral reflection on the discipline, predictability, and self-control of today's way of life.

To be a self "is inseparable from existing in a space of moral issues."[11] But Taylor's moral space is sanitized, and barely reflects the stern, barbaric process that Nietzsche, Weber, Elias, and Foucault, in different ways, document. Though he registers the emotional and spiritual "bullying" on which Cartesian and Lockean selfhood is grounded,[12] Taylor never makes this central to his account of the modern self, preferring instead to emphasize the tradition's more positive aspects: self-exploration, self-expression, personal commitment, and freedom. Consequently, as Quentin Skinner has suggested, Taylor's account borders on idealization: it is impossible to affirm a "view of the good — the one that happened to emerge victorious,"[13] in Taylor's unambiguous style. Indeed, one could be forgiven for believing that an idealizing view of the process is the inevitable concomitant of adopting an ethical stance. Nietzsche posits a particular vision of the self-controlling subject by idealizing the violence he inflicts upon himself and others.[14] Weber and Elias do not idealize, but both refuse to evaluate.[15] Where he is not ironically distanced from the disciplinary practices, Foucault betrays a questionable identification with the Roman male's proprietorial pleasure at his own self-possession.[16]

To judge without idealizing a history of modern forms of self would need a clearer sense of what it is that technologies of the self shape and regulate than either Taylor or the Nietzsche-Weber tradition are willing to

11. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

13. Quentin Skinner, "Modernity and Disenchantment: Some Historical Reflections," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism; The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*, ed. by James Tully (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.45.

14. Ben Morgan, "Fear and Self-Control in The Antichrist: Nietzsche's Prussian Past," in Nicholas Martin, ed., *Nietzsche and the German Tradition* (Frankfurt a/M: Peter Lang, forthcoming).

15. Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik*, *op. cit.*, p. 204; Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*,Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

16. Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

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formulate. It needs some rough and permanently revisable idea of human impulses and motivations, which would, first, allow historians to explain what it is the practices of self engage with (what is being monitored, moulded, and controlled), and, second, help them to assess why the practices are something worth endorsing. It needs to fill the gap that, in Foucault's theory, is tentatively and inadequately marked by the phrase: "bodies and pleasures."[17] Of course, to arrive at such a standard requires an act of imagination to catapult historians beyond the confines of their learned patterns of self, for it means viewing them from the perspective of the very thing the practices were developed to regulate and, in many instances, proscribe. But this imaginative act will only seem to be a Münchhausenesque impossibility if the individual's identity is considered monolithic and homogenizing, and if he is thought to be totally in the grasp of the practices of self-control. As soon as identity is viewed as a messier, more improvised affair — as a collection of practices developed in different sites and institutions that do not necessarily map seamlessly onto one another: family, school, love, friendship, religion, work, sport — then it is easier to grasp how aspects of it could be mobilized against itself, be they physical, emotional, or spiritual.

From this perspective, Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is an interesting text. Unlike Elias, Weber or Foucault, Horkheimer and Adorno do take a stance in their history of Western forms of rationality and identity, and, to a degree, they do so without idealizing aspects of the self, whose history they recount. The pivotal concept in their account is that of mimesis, which they define as a double-edged experience: a combination of terror and awe. On the one hand, there is a feeling of wonder and connectedness, a desire to blend with a world from which one has no awareness of being separated, a letting go that makes other versions of freedom pale in comparison. On the other hand, there is the sheerest panic at being delivered up by one's surrender to an overpowering and life-threatening force. Mixed with the glory is the fear of imminent eradication.[18] The importance of this

17. Foucault, *The Uses of Pleasure*, *op. cit.* p. 159. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tr. by Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 284-86; Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 174-77; Peter Dews, "The Return of the Subject in Late Foucault," in *Michel Foucault: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Barry Smart, Vol. 6 (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 150-52.

18. For a full discussion of mimesis, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 5, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt a/ M.: Fischer, 1987), pp. 209-216, 31-33, and 55-59.

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concept, for all its apparent vagueness, is that it gives Horkheimer and Adorno a hypothesis for the impulses behind identity. It names the emotional intensity — the infant or animal state of being delivered up to the world — which precedes and underlies social structuring. Habermas has criticized the idea as a logical impossibility, an attempt to understand theoretically something which supposedly resists all theoretical formulation.[19] But this objection only holds if one posits an unrealistically stark contrast between a monolithic, inflexible theoretical discourse and a chaotic, inarticulable "other." The more significant flaw in Horkheimer and Adorno's idea of mimesis is that they barely relate it to the modern Western identities they study. Mimesis remains an archaic residue, visible in shamanism and magic rites,[20] then flashing up in the anti-Semitic parodies of Jewish gestures,[21] in the consuming subject's helpless surrender to the products of the culture industry,[22] and in modern works of art.[23] Otherwise, it is mysteriously absent, despite the fact that it names impulses that are practically synonymous with humanity. Rather than reconstructing how and where mimetic impulses came to be regulated as Western society developed, Horkheimer and Adorno prefer an unmediated juxtaposition of the modern and the archaic. This gives their account pointed and memorable features (Odysseus as the first bourgeois subject, for instance),[24] but simultaneously weakens it by depriving it of the ability to say how mimetic impulses might otherwise be lived out. Horkheimer and Adorno ground their theory in an experience they are either unable or unwilling to locate.

This problem could have been avoided if the clear, ethical standpoint from which they gained the concept of mimesis were to be combined with the more specific historical approaches of Weber, Elias, and Foucault, thereby reconstructing the specific institutional and psychological practices by which individuals in Western societies have come to manage such mimetic impulses. In turning to history, it should also be possible to give these impulses more familiar names. In the West, the feelings of connectedness, wonder, and fear have their historical place in religious practices. To engage critically and historically with modern Western habits of selfhood means necessarily to reconstruct the ecclesiastical structures by

19. Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 Vols. (Frankfurt a/M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), Vol. 1, p. 512.
20. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-212.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

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which the Church tapped into and regulated these originary experiences. An aside in Elias's *Civilising Process* prefigures the contours of such an archaeology. To parallel his history of increasing self-control, he admits, a study could be written of the change from medieval Catholic to Protestant, post-Reformation versions of individual conscience.[25] But, Elias never follows up this hint. His own study remains ironically distanced from religious feeling, using religious vocabulary to parody the nobility's devotion to life at court,[26] but otherwise portraying intense emotions only as bodily phenomena, such as hunger, sexual desire, anger or blood lust.

To show what form an archaeology of mimetic impulses might take, as well as to emphasize the advantages it might have for an understanding and transformation of the legacy of modern selfhood, one might look at a particularly symptomatic moment in the history of late medieval Christianity: the trial of Meister Eckhart for heresy during the 1320s. A study of this liminal moment in the development of modern selfhood allows a glimpse backwards at alternative ways of relating to the longing and fear of mimesis, as well as a snapshot forward to the processes which so radically changed Western attitudes to selfhood over the long haul of modernity.

Eckhart's Context and Anthropology

Meister Eckhart's thought is the culmination of a long development in Western Christianity. Since the 12th century, a significant number of men and women had been embracing what was called the apostolic life: a life of itinerancy, preaching, and begging, for which they abandoned wealth and security in imitation of Christ and his apostles.[27] This way of life developed habits subsequently taken up by later forms of self (though, in other respects, it differed radically from them). It privileged spiritual experience over a religious life mediated by institution and hierarchy, and fostered practices — most notably, spiritual autobiography — through which this inner life was cultivated, written, and talked about in ways not dissimilar to the habits of self-cultivation now taken for granted.[28] Another factor which

25. Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 409.
26. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 365.
27. See Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, tr. by Steven Rowan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).
28. Georg Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, Vol. IV. 1 (Frankfurt a/M: Schulte-Bulmke, 1967), pp. 91-93; Siegfried Ringler, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalters: Quellen und Studien* (Munich: Artemis, 1980), p. 380.

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this form of life shared with later oppositional identities is the rejection of (at that time, nascent) practices of capitalist rationality, such as forethought and calculation. In the 1170s, Waldo, the founder of the Waldensians, gave up the wealth he had earned as a cloth merchant in Lyons, and refused to think even one day ahead, living instead from alms of food and clothing.[29] However, it would be wrong to think that the movement rejected order, institution, or hierarchy as such. In negotiation with ecclesiastical authorities in the course of the 12th and 13th centuries, many groups submitted to a form of enclosure, and agreed to model their life on an existing monastic rule.[30] The mendicant orders of the Franciscans and the Dominicans both arose at the beginning of the 13th century directly from this confrontation of spiritual impulse with the Church's desire for structure.[31] Yet, as Lester Little has argued, they also reflected a new understanding of obedience. St. Dominic said that he would rather go to each convent personally and erase the rule of the order with his knife than to have it treated as an unchallengeable framework that it was a sin to infringe.[32] The new movements accepted institutional regulation, and, indeed, saw themselves as part of the Church. But, where individual experience conflicted with the externally imposed structures, it was the inner calling that won.

The particular form of identity that this movement fostered can be ascertained from Eckhart's own texts. Eckhart worked in an institutional setting. He held senior academic and administrative posts in the Dominican order, and, on different occasions, he was responsible for overseeing the pastoral care of novices in the friary at Erfurt, and of women's communities associated with the Dominican order in the area around Strasbourg.[33] The way of life described in Eckhart's texts, however, was not

29. Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London: Paul Elek, 1978), pp. 122-24.

30. Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages*, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-57.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

33. For a summary of Eckhart's pastoral functions, see Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988), pp. 14-19. Critics such as Koch, Ruh, or Langer make Eckhart's pastoral concerns, or what Langer calls the "praktische Zwecksetzung," the central focus of his thought. Scholastic concepts, be they in the commentaries or the sermons, are ultimately a tool to help Eckhart and his charges in their spiritual endeavors. See Joseph Koch, "Sinn und Struktur der Schriftauslegung Meister Eckharts," in *Kleine Schriften*, 2 Vols. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1973), Vol. I, pp. 399-428; Kurt Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker* (Munich: Beck, 1985): Otto Langer, *Mystische Erfahrung und spirituelle Theologie: Zu Meister Eckharts Auseinandersetzung mit der Frauenfrömmigkeit seiner Zeit* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1987).

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institutionally rigidified. He insisted there was no single way to God,[34] nor were there particular rituals or patterns of behavior that guaranteed the passage to grace. Instead, Eckhart encouraged a liberating self-dismantling: "Examine yourself, and wherever you find yourself, then take leave of yourself. This is the best way of all."[35]

To a modern reader, this exhortation might seem to encourage a familiar form of introspection, but Eckhart's assumptions differed from more familiar, post-Kantian attitudes. Kant argued that, in order for something to be experienced meaningfully, there must be a subject to lay claim to it.[36] Similarly, if an action is performed, the assumption is still prevalent, despite Nietzschean critique, that it will be performed by someone, that there will be a self to whom it can be attributed.[37] To try to overcome yourself is then to get caught up in an insoluble contradiction, because the more you overcome yourself, the more you will show yourself to be an active agent or, in other words, a self. Eckhart has a less paradoxical approach. In his view, the self can be overcome without getting bogged down in philosophical contradiction. It is possible to act and to disappear, and there is no need to think that active participation in the process of disappearance will in any way compromise self-overcoming. If one does not act, there is always God to fall back on. "Intend only [God], and have no thought as to whether it is you or God who performs these things in you."[38]

This difference should not be explained as philosophical primitiveness or theological mystification, but, rather, as a reflection of the fact that the self, in the culture from which Eckhart emerged, was not abstractable in the way it now is. Evidence for this is the fact that Meister Eckhart's Middle High German did not contain the word "self." It had reflexive verbs, possessives, and pronouns: but it did not have the noun "the self." ("*Das Selbst*" did not make it into a German dictionary until

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34. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, tr. by Oliver Davies (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), pp. 190-91. Meister Eckhart, *Werke*, ed. by Niklaus Largier, tr. by Josef Quint, 2 vols. (Frankfurt a/M: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993), Vol. I, pp. 62-64 (Sermon 5A).

35. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 7. *Werke*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

36. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. by Vasilis Politis (London: Dent, 1993), p. 99: "The I think must be capable of accompanying all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought; in other words, the representation would be either impossible, or at least it would be nothing to me." (B 131-32)

37. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 7. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 340.

38. *Ibid.*, *Selected Writings*, p. 51. *Werke*, Vol. II, p. 430: "enmeine nihtes dan in, und bis unbeworren, ob got dîniu werk würke oder ob dû sie würkest."

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1702.)[39] Where a modern reader might suppose a self, Eckhart seems to have seen particular actions, habits, and attributes to which the individual clung with varying degrees of inflexibility.[40] These fragments of selfhood could be dismantled. The particular habits, rituals, and patterns of speech to which the individual had begun to cling could be isolated and discarded: "Christ fasted for forty days. You should follow him in this by considering what you are most inclined or ready to do, and then you should give yourself up in that, while observing yourself closely. It is often better for you to go freely without that than to deny yourself all food. And sometimes it is more difficult for you to refrain from uttering one word than it is to refrain from speaking altogether."[41]

In Eckhart's context, selfhood was visible in its constitutive elements: a collection of practices that had accrued gradually, but that could equally be abandoned. These practices did not exhaustively define an individual's identity. On the contrary, the habits were grasped as an obstacle between the individual and the more important experience of being with God. The difficulty for a modern reader in grasping this particular version of identity is that, while Eckhart's texts clearly show an awareness of individuality and personalization (one sermon even uses the image of portrait painting, a young art at the time Eckhart was preaching, to clarify the relation between the individual and God),[42] they are not interested in an abstractable self. The end of the personal quest is not selfhood, but self-abandonment in what Eckhart, using the theological vocabulary of his era, calls God.

Today, the union with God is even harder to understand than the fragile fragments of not-yet-self. For Eckhart, the culmination of the process of self-dismantling was a form of freedom to act in the world, as he insisted in a sermon which contrasted the relative merits of the active and

39. Eckhart speaks instead of leaving behind "that which is yours" ("ein lûter ûzgân des dînen," *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 336), or of giving up or examining "that which is one's own" ("'swer mir welle nâchvolgen, der verzîhe sich sîn selbes ze dem êrsten,' dâ liget ez allez ane. Nim dîn selbes war, und swâ dû dich vindest, dâ lâz dich; daz ist daz aller beste," bid., p. 340). The formulations are similar to modern language of the self, but they have not yet solidified into an abstractable noun.

40. The word Eckhart used for this inflexibility was "eigenschaft," in *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 26-28 (Sermon 2).

41. *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 30. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 388: "Kristus hât gevastet vierzic tage. Dar ane volge im, daz dû war nemest, war zuo dû allermeist sîst geneiget oder bereit: dâ verlâz dich ane und nim wol dîn selbes war. Daz gebürt dir dicke mêr und unbekümbert ze lâzenne, dan ob dû zemâle vastet aller spîse. Und alsô ist dir etwenne swærer ein wort ze verswîgenne, dan ob man zemâle swîge von aller rede."

42. Sermon 77, "Ecce mitto angelum meum," in Meister Eckhart, *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 138-45, esp. p. 144.

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the contemplative life,[43] and a freedom to do God's bidding at any moment.[44] This is equivalent to the receptivity Horkheimer and Adorno described as mimesis, a state of surrender in which the individual has given up the structures that control the situation, and, instead, responds intuitively or unconsciously. Something of the exhilaration provoked by this self-abandonment is reproduced in the rhythm and rhetoric of Eckhart's own sermons. If there was one rhetorical structure which characterized Eckhart's preaching, it was the habit, as Ruh has pointed out, of setting up a proposition and then triumphantly going beyond it.[45] The proposition could be a quotation from an established authority or an argument from a sermon Eckhart preached himself. What was important in either case was the moment of transcendence, the moment when Eckhart added: "But now we put it differently," "But I say more." This taking of his listeners beyond a psychological or conceptual barrier can be considered to be as a miniature enactment of the process Eckhart and his listeners had collectively embarked upon. The closest analogy in modern society is a course of constant psychotherapy, but one in which there are no fixed terms, no Oedipus complexes or transcendental signifiers, only the constant exhilaration and frequent terror of self-relinquishment.

Eckhart's Condemnation

To mention terror is to name an element made conspicuous by its absence in Eckhart's preaching. His sermons know no fear, no doubt; they are marked by a serenity and steadfastness of purpose so unruffled as almost to prompt suspicion. This can be accounted for partly by the relative security of Eckhart's life and the life of his charges. Eckhart, the Dominican Master, was a successful and senior official in an established order. The women for whose pastoral care he was responsible in Strasbourg and in Cologne were similarly protected. They were either enclosed in Dominican nunneries or cushioned by the fortune they turned over to the institution when they joined it. Alternatively, if they came from less prosperous backgrounds and belonged instead to one of the lay associations of religious women known as beguineshouses, they could earn their keep in the flourishing economy of the medieval town, which contained increasing opportunities for single women in wage labor (in domestic service, care of the sick, washing, spinning, or sewing) or, alternatively, in retail (selling feathers,

43. Sermon 86, in Meister Eckhart, *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 208-229.
44. Sermon 2, in *ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 24-37.
45. Ruh, *Meister Eckhart: Theologe, Prediger, Mystiker*, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

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soap, milk, honey or ale).[46] The new urban life, as Lester Little has argued, created an anonymous and fluid environment in which many of the certainties of medieval life were undermined.[47] At the same time, it created a space secure enough for reflection on this undermining, a space for self-questioning, and a broadening of horizons underpinned by the accumulated or accumulating wealth. However, if the space was economically secure, it was not protected from the disapproval of the Church. The period Eckhart spent in Strasbourg, from 1313 to 1323, was spotted by periodic persecutions of the beguine communities.[48] After Eckhart moved to Cologne, he became the focus of such persecutions. In 1329, the pope issued a bull condemning a number of Eckhart's teachings as heretical. Eckhart may not have known fear or insecurity, but neither his faith nor the privilege of his order could protect him from the terror institutionalized in the Church.

Eckhart's condemnation and reactions to it help understand the development of Western forms of self: they help clarify the psychological mechanisms that separate today's model of selfhood from alternatives (such as Eckhart's) in other epochs and other cultures, and so to grasp the contingency of modern Western patterns of identity. It is to stop being stuck inside the self. The first place to look, if one wants to understand why Eckhart was condemned, is the bull proscribing his teaching: *In agro dominico*.[49] The message this gave was clear: Eckhart was a thinker who

46. Dayton Phillips, *Beguines in Medieval Strasbourg: A Study of the Social Aspect of Beguine Life* (doct. diss., Stanford University, 1941), pp. 20-21. Some beguinehouses also had enough wealth in common to support their members without work.

47. Little, *Religious Poverty*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-34.

48. Alexander Patschovsky, "Straßburger Beginenverfolgungen im 14. Jahrhundert," in *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 30 (1974), pp. 56-198 (pp. 101-104).

49. For the Latin text, see Marie H. Laurent, *Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart: Les documents des archives vaticanes*, in Divus Thomas, Ser. III, 13 (1936), 331-48, 430-47 (pp. 435-44). (The notes indicate which texts the articles were extracted from.) For the English text, see James M. Clark, *Meister Eckhart: An Introduction to the Study of his Works with an Anthology of his Sermons* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1957), pp. 253-58, also in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, tr. and ed. by Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn (London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 77-81. For Eckhart's condemnation, see Oliver Davies, "Why were Eckhart's propositions condemned?," in *New Blackfriars* 71 (October 1990), pp. 433-445; Robert E. Lerner, "New Evidence for the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart," in *Speculum*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 1997), pp. 347-366; Bernard McGinn, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered," in *The Thomist* 44 (1980), pp. 390-414; Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart: Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Folgen* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1988); Bernhard Welte, *Meister Eckhart: Gedanken zu seinen Gedanken* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), pp. 249-261; Richard Woods, *Eckhart's Way* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986); *Eckardus Theutonicus, homo doctus et sanctus: Nachweise und Berichte zum Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, ed. by Heinrich Stirnimann and Ruedi Imbach (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1992).

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did not respect order, who undermined ecclesiastical hierarchy, and who threw into turmoil the economy by which the Church attempted to mediate and regulate the individual's relation to God. The statements which the bull condemned were ones in which Eckhart declared that the individual could become identical with God or Christ, that one should not wish to have avoided sins, indeed that "he who blasphemes God Himself praises God,"[50] and that God does not value good works any more than any other kind of action ("God loves souls, not external works").[51] In these statements, all the barriers that the Church had erected to establish a distance between man and the divine, and to regulate his behavior on earth, were overturned, as Eckhart apparently advised his listeners to renounce all fixed forms of devotion, to stop distinguishing sinful from virtuous behavior, and to stop drawing too rigid a line between God and his creation. Indeed, the categories and concepts which otherwise so carefully regulated God's distribution are disregarded, even to the point of God becoming apparently dependent upon the individual.[52]

The bull misread Eckhart's texts. Eckhart relativized the value of ecclesiastical rituals, as when in *Talks of Instruction* he suggested if one trod on a stone while seeking God "it would be a more godly act than if you were to receive the body of our Lord while being concerned only for yourself and having a less detached attitude of mind."[53] But, in other passages, he upheld ecclesiastical distinctions: "it is better to pray than to spin and a church is a worthier place than the street."[54] Together, these statements show that Eckhart did not disregard ecclesiastical order. But he never made order for its own sake his primary term. He respected ecclesiastical rituals, but he valued the process of turning to God even more highly. He placed attitude and experience over structure and established hierarchy: "intend God alone and seek him only. Then whatever kinds of devotional practice come to you, be content with those."[55]

The bull did not register this qualified attitude to order. This failure was not the fault of individuals who assessed Eckhart's teaching at the papal curia. Rather, the misreading was institutionalized in the inquisitorial process; indeed, it was its goal, for it was precisely such qualification or questioning of ecclesiastical structure that inquisitors were seeking to

50. Article 6, in Clark, *Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
51. Article 19, in *ibid.*, p. 256.
52. Article 13, in *ibid.*, p. 255.
53. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 8. *Werke*, Vol. II, p. 344.
54. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10. *Werke*, , *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 346.
55. *Ibid.*, pp. 191. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 64 (Sermon 5A).

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control. When doubt was cast on a text (in Eckhart's case, it appears to have been the Archbishop of Cologne, Henry of Virneburg, acting in collaboration with two friars from Eckhart's own order, Hermann de Summo and Wilhelm von Nidecke, who initiated proceedings),[56] court clerks would copy out the suspect statements and submit them to an inquisitorial commission for evaluation. The commission would then assess what it took to be the literal meaning of the words. (The words "prout sonat, ut sonat, ut verba sonant" ring like a refrain through the report that a second commission drew up once Eckhart's case had moved from Cologne to Avignon.)[57] They would neither take heed of context nor of authorial intention. Inquisitorial tribunes were concerned only to establish if individual articles read literally could be construed as heretical.[58]

In Joseph Koch's account, this process became increasingly more subtle in the sixty years from 1270 to Eckhart's condemnation in 1329. The extracted articles were quoted with increasing accuracy, and the verdicts passed became increasingly differentiated, as the business of evaluation became more and more a scholarly exercise, with expert theologians being called upon to assess the work of their academic colleagues.[59] But Koch's

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56. For the role played by Henry of Virneburg, see Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, which sees the two Dominican friars as mainly responsible, and Oliver Davies, "Why were Eckhart's Propositions Condemned?" who defends the more usual position that the Archbishop was the main force behind the inquisitorial tribune.

57. Franz Pelster, "Ein Gutachten aus dem Eckehart-Prozeß in Avignon," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, suppl. Vol. III.2 (1935), pp. 1099-1124.

58. Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, p. 118. The same interpretative techniques used to condemn Eckhart are in evidence in the trial of Marguerite Porete in 1309-1310, from whose mystical treatise, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, 15 statements were extracted regardless of context or authorial intention for examination by a commission of 21 masters. Paul Verdeyen, "Le procès contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309-1310)," in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 81 (1986), pp. 47-94 (p. 54).

59. Joseph Koch, "Philosophische und Theologische Irrtumslisten von 1270-1329," in *Kleine Schriften*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 423-50. For accounts of inquisitorial procedure stressing the increasing degree of rationality, see Bernard Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981); Winfried Trusen, "Der Inquisitionsprozeß: Seine historischen Grundlagen und frühen Formen," in *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 105 (1988), Kanonistische Abteilung, pp. 168-230. According to Koch, the commissions were even required to take into account the context of the original statements (p. 445). Although the commission which assessed Eckhart's teaching in Avignon did not consult Eckhart's texts, but analyzed only isolated articles extracted by Eckhart's accusers in Cologne (Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-19), Koch suggests that the commission had no need to consult the original texts because Eckhart was given the chance to defend his teaching both in Avignon and in Cologne (Joseph Koch, "Der Kardinal Jacques Fournier (Benedikt XII) als Gutachter in theologischen Prozessen," in his *Kleine Schriften*, Vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 382).

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vision of an ever more scholarly process of investigation obscures the hermeneutic premises on which Eckhart's trial was based. To see these more clearly, it is necessary to turn from the rarefied arena of academic assessment to the day-to-day business of inquisitorial interrogation. A chilling record of the hermeneutic assumptions behind inquisitorial procedure can be found in Bernard Gui's *Manual of an Inquisitor*.[60] Gui was a Dominican inquisitor active in the diocese of Toulouse from 1307 to 1324.[61] (He is familiar to a modern reader as the ruthless embodiment of ecclesiastical power in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*). His *Manual of an Inquisitor* is the fruit of his many years of questioning suspected heretics. It includes descriptions of the major heresies Gui encountered, accounts of the heretics' beliefs and ways of life, questions that one should use to interrogate a suspect, but also tips as to how to maximize the yield from an interrogation. The most important step, Gui suggests, is the swearing of an oath. In swearing an oath, Gui's victims were not merely assenting to tell what they took to be the truth: "They are to use words in the sense intended by the investigator, without any ruse or artifice."[62] The defendant had to take an oath to speak the language of the inquisitor. This language knows no other criteria of evaluation than the inquisitor's own. If heretics appealed to their own reading of the life of Christ, they were accused of calling evil good and turning darkness into light.[63] If they objected that the statements which the inquisitor demanded of them offended God, the inquisitor was to inform them that the sole determinant of an offence to God "is not their false notion but the judgement of the interrogator."[64] Nor was there any refuge in silence. A heretic who refused to talk on these terms could be excommunicated, starved, incarcerated, chained, or tortured "as the nature of the case and the status of the individual involved may require,"[65] and so be persuaded to capitulate. If defendants persisted in their refusal for more than a year after they were first excommunicated, the law viewed them as heretics anyway. A year's silence was equivalent to a confession of heresy.

60. Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, ed. and tr. by Guillaume Mollat, 2 vols., *Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge*, 8 and 9 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1926-27). For English selections, see *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, ed. by Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), pp. 373-445.

61. For a discussion of inquisitorial practices in the Languedoc in the early 14th century see James Given, "The Inquisitors of Languedoc and the Medieval Technology of Power," in *American Historical Review* 94 (1989), pp. 336-59.

62. Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 178. *Heresies . . ., op. cit.*, p. 436.

63. Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 176. *Heresies . . ., op. cit.*, p. 435

64. Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 178. *Heresies . . ., op. cit.*, p. 436.

65. Gui, *Manuel de l'inquisiteur*, *op. cit.*, p. 182. *Heresies . . ., op. cit.*, p. 437.

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Victims could at this point be turned over to the secular arm of the law to be burned. The hermeneutic principle behind Gui's interrogations is clear. Heretics gave up their own experience and submitted to the language the inquisitor imposed on them or they died.

The assumptions which underpinned Gui's coercion of meaning underpinned the papal commission's interpretation of Eckhart's teaching. When the heretics of Languedoc appealed to their own inner conviction to explain why they held their beliefs, Gui was deaf. He heard either a diabolical inversion of established truths or a challenge to his authority as inquisitor. Eckhart's judges were similarly deaf; indeed, they expressed their lack of understanding in exactly the same words as Gui.[66] Once again, the term ignored is experience.[67] Just as the sermons and the *Talks of Instruction* made turning toward God the sole guarantee of practices, rituals, or beliefs, so Eckhart defended himself by appealing to his godly intention. This was partly tactical. Heresy, as defined in the later Middle Ages, was always a question of intention. Important was not the fact that one had made a theological error, but that he had pertinaciously clung to his mistake, even after the inquisitor had pointed it out. To counter the accusations of heresy levelled at him by the inquisitorial commission, Eckhart publicly declared in the Dominican Church in Cologne: "I have always abhorred all errors in faith and all aberrations in morals," adding that he would willingly correct and retract any teachings found to be erroneous.[68] Yet, if the public proclamation was a tactical necessity, the appeal to genuine intention was the very substance of Eckhart's defence. In the record that survives of his self-explanation before the tribunal in Cologne, Eckhart repeats again and again that his texts will cease to appear erroneous or false if the spirit of devotion out of which they were written is taken into account. As soon as this genuine intention is acknowledged, as soon as an attempt is made to "reasonably and devoutly" reconstruct their meaning, Eckhart believed the "excellent and useful truths of faith and moral teaching" that his writings contain would

66. The same accusation of calling evil good and making darkness light returns in the report by the commission in Avignon, see Pelster, "Ein Gutachten," *op. cit.*, p. 1113, l. 32.

67. For two accounts of Eckhart's trial which focus on this issue, see McGinn, "Eckhart's Condemnation Reconsidered," *op. cit.*; and Welte, *Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-61.

68. For a translation of the public statement, see Clark, *Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, p. 252. For an account of this phase of the trial, see Winfried Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-95. For the medieval concept of heresy, see *ibid.*, Chapter VI, "Zum Häresiebegriff im Spätmittelalter."

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become obvious.[69] Then, even the most extreme turns of rhetoric would arouse only "love of virtue and of God."[70] As in his treatises and sermons, so in his defence, Eckhart made the longing for God the guarantee of both doctrine and practice.

To the theologians assessing Eckhart's teachings, this exclusive reliance on the individual's desire for God was not merely heretical; it encouraged others to sin, for it stripped away the ecclesiastical structures that otherwise regulate their behavior.[71] Where Eckhart's texts presuppose an individual for whom doctrine, rhetoric, and ritual are not an end in themselves, but tools to further self-overcoming, the inquisitors acknowledged no such inner guidance. Their contrary view is betrayed by a term which crops up in Eckhart's final condemnation, but which can also be found in other similar documents: the legal fiction of "simple folk" (in the words of the bull, the "simple heart" or "*corda simplicium*").[72] These simple subjects are individuals with no inner life or will, individuals whom specious doctrine will inevitably corrupt. They are individuals with no spiritual experience. These broken subjects are but the flipside of the defendant in Gui's interrogations, the subject who surrendered all interiority in the oath he took to speak the inquisitor's language. Between them, the two images represent the form of subjectivity on which the inquisition was premised, and to which it adapted its practices of interpretation and interrogation: a subject framed and controlled by the inquisitor's language and by his pre-established dogmas, a subject who had renounced all experience of God.[73] Eckhart, in contrast, is condemned because his whole pastoral project depended on this individual, yet shareable experience of divinity.

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69. Augustinus Daniels, "Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift des Meister Eckhart," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters* Vol. 23, No. 5 (1923), pp. 1-66 (p. 34, II. pp. 22-24). For selections from the defence, see *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-77 (p. 76).

70. *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, tr.. and ed. by Raymond Blakney (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), p. 286. Daniels, "Eine lateinische Rechtfertigungsschrift," *op. cit.*, p. 39, II. pp. 10-14.

71. Pelster, "Ein Gutachten," *op. cit.*, pp. 1115-16 (Article XV).

72. Marie H. Laurent, *Autour du procès de Maître Eckhart*, *op. cit.*, p. 443. See also Paul Verdeyen, "Le procès contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309-1310)," *op. cit.*, p. 78. For an account of the trial which takes this concern to be the main issue cf. Georg Steer, "Der Prozess Meister Eckharts und die Folgen," in *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 27 (1986), pp. 47-64.

73. This is what Koch's picture of an increasingly scholarly process of inquiry obscures. In some cases, commissioners may have referred to the original texts, but if context does not include the experiential situation of a statement, if it does not acknowledge the speaker's longings, then the article evaluated will still be misread.

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A Peculiar Insanity

At the time that Eckhart's teaching was condemned, there was no such thing as "the Inquisition," there was no overarching bureaucratic structure to unite the various embodiments of inquisitorial practice into a uniform institution.[74] Nevertheless, Gui's statement of practice and the commission's reading of Eckhart display the same logic: the same exclusion of experience. There may have been no single institution to ensure uniformity of action by individual inquisitors or inquisitorial tribunes. There was, nevertheless, a situation repeating itself across Europe. The conflict of assumptions that transpires in Eckhart's trial is part of the longer history of the turn to the apostolic life. The latter posed a threat to the Church, because it by-passed the priesthood, finding in imitation and the re-modelling of one's own habits a more direct relation to God. Yet, the followers of the apostolic life did not desire to challenge the Church. Waldo went to Rome in 1179 to seek papal permission for his preaching. Permission was not granted, on the grounds that the layman was assumed to be theologically incompetent. But the story illustrates how little Waldo wished to step outside the Church. The Church could tolerate this new form of life, but only if it allowed itself to be regulated and adopted a monastic rule. The new religious groupings accepted this ordering insofar as it did not directly interfere with their longing for God. During the 13th century, an unstable compromise reigned, of which the mendicant orders were a symptom. Frameworks had been established within which a more intense religious life could legally prosper, but the ecclesiastical institution still saw itself to be in control.

By the beginning of the 14th century, this compromise was breaking down, and it is no coincidence that this is also a period in which the apostolic life acquired a mystical fervor. The symptom of this collapse was the invention of a heresy which, as Robert Lerner argues, had no adherents before it was created by papal decree at the Council of Vienne in 1311-1312: the heresy of the free spirit.[75] There is still controversy as to what this heresy actually entailed. The documents pertaining to persecutions of supposed offenders make salacious reading. Heretics are accused of all

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74. Richard Kieckhefer, *The Repression of Heresy in Medieval Germany* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1979); and "The Office of Inquisition and Medieval Heresy: The Transition from Personal to Institutional Jurisdiction," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995), pp. 36-61.

75. Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 82-83.

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sorts of mouth-watering crimes, from preaching in the nude, to sexual orgies and infant sacrifice. But, it appears that these accusations bear little resemblance to what the people actually did.[76] The documents indicate little more than that the people branded as heretics were feared. The bull *Ad nostrum*, which first defined the heresy, is more useful, since it lists the specific tenets that the heretics are supposed to have espoused. The most important is the belief that man in this life can achieve such a degree of perfection that he is incapable of sin.[77] For the bull, however, this meant little more than a licence for unbridled sex. The heretics of the free spirit were said to think kissing a sin, but sexual intercourse a natural function that may be freely indulged.[78]

For a more reliable image of the form of life which the Church feared, it helps to look at another bull that was issued in parallel with *Ad nostrum*, in which the heresy of the free spirit was defined: *Cum de quibusdam mulieribus*, which outlawed the beguine life. Unlike the heretics of the free spirit, the beguines did exist. They were a striking feature of the growing cities in Flanders, North East France, and the Rhineland. Like the heretics of the free spirit, the beguine posed a threat because, as the bull puts it, they "promise obedience to no one . . . and do not make profession of any approved rule."[79] But the bull gives us a more concrete clue as to what made this lack of regulation so dangerous. It tells of beguines "who, as if led by a peculiar insanity, argue and preach on the Holy Trinity and the divine essence"[80] What is important here is not the fact that women dared to preach on matters of doctrine (an area which was otherwise considered the sole preserve of ordained priests), but rather the manner in which the women preached: the "peculiar insanity." The Church found itself presented with an inner fervor which it could not regulate as it regulated texts and rituals. It was faced with a conviction

76. This is a point made over and over by, e.g., Lerner, *ibid.*, p. 90.

77. For translations of all the decrees issued by the Council of Vienne (1311-1312), see *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*, ed. by H. J. Schroeder, (London: Herder, 1937), p. 389. For the Latin texts, see Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoires des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, tr. H. Leclercq, Vol. 6, Part 2 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1915), pp. 672-715.

78. *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*, *op. cit.*, p. 390; and Hefele, *Histoires des conciles*, *op. cit.*, p. 683.

79. *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils*, *op. cit.*, p. 880; and Hefele, *Histoires des conciles*, *op. cit.*, p. 681: "nulli promittant obedientiam, . . . neque profiteantur aliquam regulam approbatam."

80. Hefele, *Histoires des conciles*, *op. cit.*, p. 681: "earum aliquæ, quasi perductæ in mentis insaniam, de summa Trinitate ac divina essentia disputent et prædicent."

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which, through its indifference to the world around it, slipped outside the net of classification to remain threatening, independent, and unknown. It is little surprise that the Church branded this inner attitude as madness, and demanded its extirpation.

To some, this intensity was a source of inspiration.[81] An anonymous tract, dating from the time Eckhart was in Strasbourg, tells the story of a male confessor who is eventually so overwhelmed by the fervor and sanctity of his female charge that he is drawn into what he calls a divine manifestation.[82] Nor is this inspiration to be found only in quasi-fictional texts. The Swedish Dominican Peter of Dacia visited the German visionary beguine Christine of Stommeln again and again, and was so inspired by what he felt to be her immediate experience of the divinity that he became her biographer.[83] To the papal authorities, however, the beguines' self-surrender was a threat so intense that it prompted the terrified fantasies of which the decrees of the Council of Vienne are but the driest record. The fear is partly the institutional reaction to a way of life whose motivation was not the order and hierarchy so jealously guarded by the Church. To the men who constituted the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the spectacle of securities so carelessly abandoned could only provoke anger, misunderstanding, and a desperate re-affirmation of their own painfully acquired social identities.

Eckhart shared the "peculiar insanity" of the beguines.[84] Though he preached sermons which sought to temper the visionary excesses of the nuns and beguines under his pastoral supervision,[85] this suspicion of

81. Caroline Bynum summarizes the developments that helped to establishing this visionary role for women in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 9-21 and 247-62.

82. "The 'Sister Catherine' Treatise," tr. by Elvira Borgstädt, *in Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), pp. 347-87 (p. 383); Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik: Seine Beziehung zur Ketzerei der 'Brüder und Schwestern vom Freien Geist'. Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf den pseudoeckartischen Traktat 'Schwester Katrei'* (Frankfurt a/M: Peter Lang, 1981), pp. 322-70 (p. 369).

83. Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguines and Beghards in Medieval Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 344-355. For similar cases of mutual inspiration, see Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, "Male Confessors and Female Penitents: Possibilities for Dialogue," in *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 139-160.

84. Lerner presents new evidence for the connections the ecclesiastical authorities saw between Eckhart's preaching and the beguines and beghards in "New Evidence for the Condemnation of Meister Eckhart," in *Speculum*, Vol. 72, No. 2 (April 1997), pp. 347-366.

85. See his discussion of the figures of Martha and Mary, see "Intravit Iesus in quoddam castellum, et mulier quaedam, Martha nomine, excepit illum," in Meister Eckahart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-202. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 208-29 (Sermon 86).

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bodily ecstasy should not blind us to the impulses he had in common with his female charges. The insanity that the Church condemned consisted not in trances, visions, or bodily anomalies, such as spontaneous lactation or stigmata particularly associated with women's mysticism. On the contrary, these outward sounds were re-assuring, for they gave the Church evidence that it could catalogue and categorize.[86] What it feared most was an inner turning to God, and the apparent indifference to ecclesiastical order that this brought with it, which is evident in the calm conviction that lets Eckhart brush criticism aside with the words: "For me, it is enough to say that what I say and what I write is true in me and in God."[87] The Church could not tolerate this unregulatable inner conviction, but neither could the people. Bernard Hamilton has pointed out how, before the establishment of the inquisition, heretics often did not live long enough to face official sanctions, because they were lynched. In contradicting the Church, heretics undermined the framework of certainty within which people moved, provoking a blind panic and rage.[88] By the 14th century, such uncontrolled violence was less common. But the fear of the heretics' fervor lived on in the popular image of the beguine as a whore in a habit. Beguines, in the popular imagination, were not to be trusted.[89] This popular mistrust suggests that more was at stake than ecclesiastical doctrine or the authority of the Church. The "peculiar insanity" of the beguines and of Eckhart was a direct affront to a more basic desire for security and stability, of which the Church was but the institutional expression.

Conclusions: The Origins of the Self

Neither Eckhart nor his congregation considered him a heretic. In the wake of his condemnation, individuals were left with the problem of reconciling their own desire for surrender with the Church's demand for regulation. No one knows how Eckhart solved this dilemma. He is said by the bull to have recanted his errors before he died, but the exact circumstances both of the final recanting and of his death are unknown. More revealing

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86. For a discussion of the Church's desire to transform mystical experience into a collection of classifiable outward signs, see Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. 26-39.

87. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 94. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 310.

88. Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

89. For an account of popular images of beguines, see *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the later Middle Ages*, *op. cit.*, Chapter 1.

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here is the *Book of Truth* by Heinrich Seuse — a younger Dominican, who took it upon himself to defend his master after the 1329 condemnation.

Seuse's *Book of Truth* indicates how modern habits of selfhood developed and reveals the extent to which the author had internalized the inquisition's assumptions by placing order and hierarchy before experience.[90] The main symptom of this internalization is the absolute limit Seuse imposed on surrender. However far the individual pursued the path of self-overcoming, in Seuse's eyes he would never finally kick off the limiting traces of humanity.[91] He would never "be born in the Son and become one Son" in the way Eckhart sermons suggested,[92] he would always be human. On the face of it, this limit granted Seuse the freedom to be much more explicit than Eckhart about the forms ecstatic rapture will take. He could wax eloquent about an ecstasy that he likened to the self-forgetfulness of inebriation.[93] Yet, this apparent freedom should not blind us to the framework of prohibitions by which it was constrained. The text was concerned to establish limits more than to foster religious ecstasy. It wanted to be sure it had made the necessary distinctions before it surrendered to its longing.

This policing of theological distinctions would become a recurring theme in Seuse's later work. Toward the end of his life, he oversaw the production of a new edition of his texts, which he prefaced with a spiritual autobiography whose function was to show by example the order to which an individual seeking spiritual development should submit his life.[94] To

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90. Heinrich Seuse, "Büchlein der Wahrheit," in *Heinrich Seuse: Deutsche Schriften im Auftrag der Württembergischen Kommission für Landesgeschichte*, ed. by Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1907; repr. Frankfurt a/M: Minerva, 1961), pp. 326-59; Henry Suso, *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom and Little Book of Truth*, tr. and ed.by James M. Clark (London: Faber, 1953), pp. 171-208. For a discussion of the book and its relation to Eckhart's thought, see Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, *op. cit.*; Trusen, *Der Prozeß gegen Meister Eckhart*, *op. cit.*; and Alois M. Haas, *Nim din selbes war: Studien zur Lehre von der Selbsterkenntnis bei Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler und Heinrich Seuse* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1971).

91. Suso, *Little Book of Truth*, *op. cit.*, p. 183; and Seuse, "Büchlein der Wahrheit," *op. cit.*, p. 334: "Aber ellú andrú menschen dú hant ir naturlich understandunge in irem natúrlichen wesenne, und wie genzklich sú in selber iemer entgant ald wie luterlich sú sich iemer gelazsent in der warheit, so geschihet daz nit, daz sú in der goetlichen persone understandunge iemer úbersetzet werden und die iren verlieren."

92. Meister Eckhart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 142, *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 442-4.

93. Suso, *Little Book of Truth*, *op. cit.*, p. 185. "Büchlein der Wahrheit," *op. cit.*, p. 336.

94. The book "git togenlich [secretly/indirectly] ze erkennen, in weler ordenhafti [order] ein reht anvahender mensch [someone at the beginning of spiritual life] sol den ussern und den inren menschen richten nah gotes aller liepsten willen." "Seuses Leben," *Heinrich Seuse: Deutsche Schriften*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

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reinforce the message and provide a further example of orthodox behavior, Seuse included an account of the development of one of his spiritual charges, the Dominican nun Elsbeth Stagel. Inspired by mystics such as Eckhart's, Stagel is said to have approached Seuse;[95] she is told that to read such texts is damaging as long as she has not acquired the necessary interpretative tools. Until that point, she should limit herself to questions that are appropriate to her stage of development.[96] This prohibition, however, is not merely hermeneutic. The point is that she should be so inculcated with Seuse's rules for managing inner life that a misreading of Eckhart's or Seuse's more speculative moments become a behavioral impossibility. When, toward the end of the book, she is allowed to venture onto this territory, it is only because she has now been adequately shaped by Seuse's education — in the imagery of the text, Stagel, like "wax softened by the heat of a flame" has been "imprinted" with Seuse's seal, so there is no risk of her reading contrary to Seuse's expectations.[97] Even then, her role in the speculative conversation is limited to affirming the conceptual divisions which Seuse expounds: his preference for conformity over individual reasoning; his warning that even the mystic cannot cast off human coarseness to become one with God; and his insistence that humans will always remain separated from divinity by their "accidentia" or empirical attributes.[98] Stagel's voice is used merely to reinforce this policing of mystical surrender.[99]

Seuse's texts portray a form of identity based on the regulation of spiritual longing. In this form of identity, individuals still feel the longing, and still labor to surrender themselves to God. At the same time, they subject themselves to constant internal checks, which limit in advance the form the surrender may take. From these habits of self-control, the modern subject is born, quite literally, in Seuse's *Book of Truth*. Where Meister Eckhart's text had no equivalent to the modern word "self," Seuse's text unexpectedly discovers the noun: "*das sich*." The discovery is superficially prompted by an analysis of the verb "to take leave of oneself," the Middle High German "*sich lazsen*."[100] True to the scholastic habit of cutting up a

95. "*Seuse's Leben*," *op. cit.*, pp. 97-99. Eckhart's texts are mentioned on p. 99.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 155: "[disú heiligú tohter] waz nah dem ussern menschen geberret als ein lindes wehsli be dem fúre, daz der forme dez insigels enpfenklich ist worden."
98. *Ibid.*, p. 156, pp. 157-59 and 162-63.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
100. Suso, *Little Book of Truth*, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-84; and Seuse, "*Büchlein der Wahrheit*," *op. cit.*, pp. 334-35.

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phrase or sentence arbitrarily, so as to draw meaning from its individual elements, Seuse offers a series of glosses on both of the words "*lazsen*" and "*sich.*" In effect, he is trying to define more closely what it is the mystical subject must abandon when he takes leave of himself, to define the self that differentiates and distances the individual from God. However, the effort of definition forces Seuse to group together and fix as a noun impulses that, for Eckhart, never have the same abstract coherence or rigidity. It forces him to invent the term "*ein eigen sich.*"

The formulation is perhaps fortuitous, and the difference from equivalent formulations in Eckhart's texts not enormous.[101] It is important, however, because it illustrates the constellation of elements from which the drive toward an abstractable self emerges. The key element is the longing for God: the pursuit of openness of which Eckhart's texts and the

101. One of Eckhart's text, which approaches Seuse's usage — the sermon on "Renouamini spiritu" (Sermon 83) — is a classic statement of negative theology: "what we can know or say of the First Cause reflects ourselves more than it does the First Cause, for this transcends all speech and understanding. See Meister Eckart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 236. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 190. Having said the attributes ascribed to God are always inappropriately human, Eckhart changes tack. He says there should be no talk about God, but adds that all human attributes should be made into God's attributes. For to transform them thus is to realize their inadequacy and so slip beyond them into the nothingness of divinity. See Meister Eckart, *Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 237. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 192. In describing this process, Eckhart uses linguistic forms not unlike Seuse's "ein eigen sich." He talks of "your yourness" ("dine dinisheit," "din din") and of God's "hisness" ("sine sinesheit," "sin sin"). Returning to the theme a little later in the sermon he adds: "God must become me and I must become God, so entirely one that this 'he' and this 'I' become one 'is'" (*Selected Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 238. *Werke*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 194: "Got mvos vil bi ich werden vnd ich vil bi got, alse gar ein, das dis 'er' vnd dis 'ich' Ein 'ist' werdent.") Such turns of phrase are similar to Seuse. Yet, they remain distinct, for the process Eckhart is describing differs fundamentally from Seuse's. In Eckhart's text, the attributes that fix fix human beings in their terrestrial habits are cast off to pave the way for unity with God. In this process, the rounding on attributes and possessions is only fast transitory step. The terminology used to describe the step is correspondingly improvised. Eckhart plays with a variety of terms for selfhood ("dine dinisheit," "din din," "ein min," "dis 'er'," "'dis 'ich'"). His aim, however, is always to push beyond it to a being beyond self. Seuse, in contrast, has set a limit to his desire to be united with God. He knows in advance his surrender must never be total, and the language he uses to group the attributes which separate him from God is correspondingly more definite. It is as if the energy which would otherwise have propelled him towards God is re-channelled into the scholastic fixing of the features which keep him in exile: the enumeration of a five-level self ("ein ieklicher mensch hat fünfley sich"). See *Büchlein der Wahrheit*, *op. cit.*, p. 334; *Little Book of Truth*, *op. cit.*, p. 183). More important than the actual words ("dis 'er' vnd dis 'ich'" v. "ein eigen sich") is the attitude behind them. Eckhart coins phrases to break habits and push ever closer to God. Seuse coins phrases to fix distinctions and to establish the barriers of the self. This attitude of self-fixing, rather than the particular usages it engenders, marks the beginning of a recognizably modern self.

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women's communities to whom he ministered were so strong an expression. The second term is the heresy of the free spirit: the fiction of an undisciplined freedom that crystallized in the decrees of the Council of Vienne. The decrees show the ecclesiastical institution reacting to, but anxiously misrepresenting a longing which the Church branded as a "peculiar insanity." The individual must negotiate between these two impulses: the desire for surrender, and the requirement that self-abandonment be policed. In Seuse's case, he reacted by internalizing the habits of self-monitoring, by constantly holding back. From this permanent blocking of surrender, the modern self is born, for the block establishes a structure from which one cannot escape, an apparatus of inner self-control that is always there to regulate and to restrict the longing. One can never be Christ. It is a straight, if not unbroken line that leads from this premise to Kant's conviction that experience will always be accompanied by the unspoken "I think," by the silent instruction that thought is all there is, and that one's thoughts must stay one's own.

The cases of Eckhart and Seuse are of particular interest for a historical understanding of forms of selfhood, because they so clearly show what impulses modern forms of self-monitoring were developed to police, giving Horkheimer and Adorno's mimetic impulses a more easily recognizable position in the institutions and the habits of modern Western societies. The practices of self-control emerged to regulate the desire for surrender and for a particular experience of freedom embodied by Eckhart and other adherents of the apostolic life in the 13th and 14th centuries: the desire to "become God."[102] A similar sense of freedom can be found in other cultures and in other epochs. The Sufi al-Hallaj was publicly executed in 922 for his ecstatic declaration that he was God.[103] As with medieval European culture, the claim of a proximity to divinity was also problematic for medieval Islamic culture. Nevertheless, the solution arrived at was very different. Where, in the West, the dominant modern form of subjectivity arose as individuals themselves

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102. In the "Sister Catherine" Treatise, the beguine declares to her confessor; "Sir, rejoice with me, I am become God!"/"Herre, fröwent uch mitt mir, ich bin gott geworden!" Franz-Josef Schweitzer, *Der Freiheitsbegriff der deutschen Mystik*, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

103. For a detailed study of the life and ideas of al-Hallaj in their medieval context, see Louis Massignon, *The Passion of al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, tr. by Herbert Mason, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Massignon notes parallels between al-Hallaj and Eckhart in "Muslim and Christian Mysticism in the Middle Ages," in *Testimonies and Reflections: Essays of Louis Massignon*, ed. by Herbert Mason (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 128.

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took on the role of policing and distancing themselves from their longing for God, the solution in Islamic culture was less drastic. Sufi mysticism was permitted a role alongside the structures of the official clerisy: "Public rituals and regulations of Islam were the husk beneath which was an inner awareness of a personal relationship with God."[104] As long as the mystics publicly conformed, Sunni orthodoxy was willing to allow Sufis their private sense of unity with God.

The practices of self associated with this compromise granted space to longings, rather than stamping them with the imprint of orthodoxy (which is the solution Seuse eventually adopts). A similar division can be found occasionally in Western society (the Waldensians survived in some areas of Central Europe by concealing their rituals and beliefs behind superficially conformist behavior),[105] but never in a form so fully developed. What both examples suggest is that the path adopted by Seuse and made culturally dominant in the West since the time of the Reformation is not the only one conceivable. There are other ways of regulating longing, other possible attitudes to freedom. Returning to the constellation of forces from which modern habits of selfhood emerged helps to perceive these alternatives more clearly, as well as to understand what is at stake beneath the particular form of selfhood still prevalent in the West. It helps to edge our way beyond the apparently inescapable, abstractable self, allowing us to grasp that our way of being a self is just one among many of coming to terms with the longing for contact and surrender with "mimesis" or with "God."

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104. Charles Lindholm, *The Islamic Middle East: An Historical Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 190.

105. Robert E. Lerner, "A Case of Religious Counter-Culture: The German Waldensians," in *American Scholar* 55 (1986), pp. 234-247.

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Sounding Autonomy: Adorno, Coltrane and Jazz

Nick Nesbitt

Theodor W. Adorno's writings on jazz call out endlessly for interpretation. The observations of this master of the rhetorical and philosophical paradox seem to have lived on beyond their allotted time — a time perhaps delimited by his reliance upon Winthrop Seargeant's *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* (1938) and the term "bebop," whose hollow ringing deforms the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (1961).[1] Adorno perversely denies jazz the most fundamental insight of his aesthetic theory: that "art at every point participates in concepts." Instead, he dismisses it as a pure instantiation of the culture industry.[2] His thought rigidifies whenever he returns to the subject in an indeterminate negation that brings his negative dialectic to a crashing halt. The unbearable sight of his thought relapsing into what it most abhorred accosts his interpreters like the naked protestors who brought an inglorious end to his public career in 1969. In response to this aporia, critics have found ingenious, often compelling ways to salvage or to explain away his rigid condemnation of America's greatest art form.

This vein of criticism, for all the complexity of historical detail it has brought forth, has till now ignored the most promising application of Adorno's thought to jazz. The increasingly diminishing returns of his musings on jazz are limited by their relegation to a single field within Adorno's wide-ranging thought: the critique of the Culture Industry. What

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, tr. by E. B. Ashton. (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976) Cited hereafter as SM.

2. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 336. Cited hereafter as AT.

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if jazz were considered instead, not as commodity, but rather as a musical-aesthetic object, restoring to it a degree of the dialectical process Adorno's own comments forsake? This modest proposal to presuppose jazz's status as a finely articulated creative phenomenon — contra Adorno — opens its practice to this century's most compelling aesthetics of music.[3]

An Adornian aesthetics of jazz[4] would examine the ways in which

3. James Harding argues that Adorno's writings on the subject did on occasion achieve a degree of reflexivity, though he "was never able to see a function of jazz beyond the minstrelsy he criticized in 1936 and 1938." See James M. Harding, "Adorno, Ellison, and the Critique of Jazz," in *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995), p. 153. Following Wolfgang Sandner, Thomas Crow and Jamie Owen Daniel, J. Bradford Robinson has argued that Adorno is primarily talking about the interwar German music which bore the name "jazz," a music that, Robinson claims, had no structural or historic ties with American Jazz. See J. Bradford Robinson, "The Jazz Essays of Theodor Adorno: Some Thoughts on Jazz Reception in Weimar Germany," in *Popular Music*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1994), pp. 1-26. See also Thomas Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Popular Music*, 2nd. ed. by Benjamin Buchloch *et al.* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), pp. 8-38; Jamie Owen Daniel, "'Introduction' to *Über Jazz*," in *Discourse*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Fall-Winter 1989-90), pp. 36-69. Evelyn Wilcock vehemently denies this limitation to Adorno's experience of jazz, and provides an elaborate historical description of the jazz milieus Adorno encountered in England and elsewhere, though the author produces little to show that this social environment had any impact on Adorno's own thought. Evelyn Wilcock, "Adorno, Jazz and Racism: 'Über Jazz' and the 1934-7 British Jazz Debate," in *Telos* 107 (1996), pp. 63-80. In his compelling critique of the "Über Jazz" article, Harry Cooper sustains Wilcock's argument, while concluding that Adorno's "furtive, repeated *glances* [at jazz] are the bad-faith of the high-cultural fetishist. Why pretend otherwise?" (p. 108). See Harry Cooper, "On *Über Jazz:* Replaying Adorno with the Grain," in *October* 75 (1996), pp. 99-133. Ulrich Schönherr's proposition to "read Adorno's jazz studies in the context of his analysis of the music of the twentieth century" (p. 86) is welcome. The critical thrust of his analysis, however, remains focused on the discourse of the Culture Industry, refuting point for point, yet again, Adorno's understanding of jazz. Moreover, Schönherr offers no support for his claim that "The innovative practice of jazz since the 1950's . . . has largely fulfilled what Adorno had not seen realized in jazz" (p. 93). While this may well be the case, Schönherr does not support his claim through an engagement with this music, evoking only a vague "communication free of domination" putatively instantiated in modern jazz. In Schönherr's reading, jazz and Adorno remain absolutely repellent; instead, they can and must mediate one another, since enormous areas of his thought, both musical and philosophical, are entirely congenial to jazz. See Ulrich Schönherr, "Adorno and Jazz: Reflections on a Failed Encounter," in *Telos* 87 (Spring 1991) pp. 85-96.

4. Russel A. Berman and Robert D'Amico accuse Adorno of "maintaining a sometimes crude sociological account of reflection between music and social structure" hampered by "immediate, ungainly analogies between musical decisions and social crises." See Russell A. Berman and Robert D'Amico, "Introduction: Popular Music from Adorno to Zappa," in *Telos* 87 (Spring 1991), pp. 71-77. While this is not untrue of many moments in Adorno's work, their facile dismissal overlooks the examination of various mediations that makes his thought so unique in musical aesthetics: "At every point here the true problem of the sociology of music is one of mediations" See Theodor W. Adorno, *Sound Figures*, tr. by Rodney B. Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 3. Cited hereafter as SF.

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dominant socio-historical tendencies become objectified in this music via the interaction between the artist and the musical material.[5] What Fredric Jameson has called the "ideology of form"[6] is transferred through the historically developing combinatory processes available to an artist at a given moment. In turn, an artist is confronted with problems of composition that take an objective form, allowing for the appearance of a highly situated, contingent "truth-content." Artists are not free to create anything, but must successfully mediate subjectivity through the material they inherit. In this view, jazz is not the expression of the free will of an inspired genius, but rather the attempt to find answers to specific problems of musical material that confront the musician in the process of composition, whether written or improvised.

In fact, the obsessive focus on Adorno's own ideas about jazz has hidden the implications his aesthetic theory holds for jazz studies. His unique understanding of the Viennese modernist composers holds surprisingly suggestive implications for modernist jazz musicians as well: Adorno's aesthetic theory develops a wealth of insights into artistic and specifically musical processes capable of redirection to other musical objects. Precisely due to their distance from traditional jazz criticism, these insights can help avoid what Adorno dismissed as mere "culinary" writing, instead of doing justice to the music itself, outlining "an aesthetics that will provide the capacity for reflection, which art on its own is hardly able to achieve" (AT, p. 341). This "dialectical aesthetics" can reveal many things about a music it haughtily condemns. Its concepts cannot, of course, be applied to jazz uncritically; they in turn must participate in this dialectic if they are to bring about a new understanding of jazz. Yet, Adorno's aesthetic theory, according to its own postulates, cannot be left as a reified "theory." Instead, it must be brought into contact with aesthetic objects themselves, and there is reason to believe that it is precisely those objects most antinomical to its own self-understanding that will most alter aesthetic insight.

Here one should begin by examining a straightforward and seemingly obvious claim: that familiarity with African-American music is essential for an understanding of African-American culture in general. One comes across

5. Berman and D'Amico, *op. cit.*, p. 72, dismiss 1950s and 1960s jazz as a "feigned musical upheaval . . . glorified as black resistance to slavery and oppression" solely on the basis of the music's subsequent self-positioning within the Culture Industry in the 1980s and 1990s. Such an abstract critique can only be countered with a more determinate argument.

6. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1981), p.100.

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this sentiment in many different forms, and it is an axiomatic assertion in much of the greatest writing emanating from African-American culture. From Langston Hughes to Ralph Ellison, W.E.B. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk* to Amiri Baraka's *Blues People*, to choose only a few canonical examples, countless writers have underlined this central aspect of African-American culture.[7] The attention devoted to jazz in literature, cultural criticism, and the media testifies to its centrality and visibility. Yet, taken literally, the claim opens a whole range of problems that only recently have begun to be addressed by writers such as Krin Gabbard, Ingrid Monson, Ronald Rodano and Bernard Gendron — problems which imply a fundamental shift in its mode of inquiry. The claim is that African-American music, jazz in particular, is not merely a musical practice. It is also a vehicle of communication that tells a more-than-musical story in an encoded form — a story that is more than organized sound; one which contains ciphers of the social reality out of which it arose.

The development of a model of musical communication capable of addressing the social content of jazz is a logical next step in a field that has often moved between the two poles of subjective, anecdotal commentary and objective, analytical inquiry. On the one hand, for over half a century, an abundant literature has described the lives of jazz musicians, including biographies, interviews, studies of their language, the clubs in which they play, and the social environment out of which they arose. As productive and enjoyable as these texts can be, their analysis has often foregrounded jazz musicians or the jazz milieu, limiting understanding of the music itself to impressionistic musings. On the other hand, others have carried out a musicological analysis of jazz.[8] Despite its importance, this approach largely abandons the problems of musical communication,[9]

7. It probably received its most direct formulation in James Baldwin's 1955 essay "Many Thousands Gone": "It is only in his music, which Americans are able to admire because a protective sentimentality limits their understanding of it, that the Negro in America has been able to tell his story. It is a story which otherwise has yet to be told and which no American is prepared to hear."James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), p. 65.

8. Here, the influential work of Gunther Schuller comes to mind, as well as the more recent work of authors such as Lewis Porter and Ken Rattenbury.

9. This is succinctly summarized by Paul Gilroy: "The power of music in developing black struggles by communicating information, organizing consciousness, and testing out or deploying the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency, whether individual or collective, defensive or transformational, demands attention to both the formal attributes of this expressive culture and its distinctive *moral* basis." See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 36, Gilroy's emphasis.

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submitting to the immanence of the musical object, tending to neglect its status as cultural product. While the musical object's existence as a socially and historically inflected text is by now a commonplace, the implications of this view are only now beginning to be developed. Attention to what Ingrid Monson terms "the shaping of cultural meaning and human subjectivities" remains uncommon.[10] In exploring this problem with other musicians, one runs up against the view expressed by one older trumpet player, who stated that there is no social content to jazz, and that if musicians had wanted to provide political messages, they would have become "politicians, not musicians."

This position is unsustainable. First of all, it is anti-intellectual: it would deny the validity of even exploring the possibility of jazz's having a social content, and it further presupposes that it is only in the organized political arena, whether at grass roots or more official levels, that critical discourse can occur. Adorno's analysis of this attitude goes so far as to claim that it partakes of certain personality traits shared by many musicians. Here, an idealistic, quasi-religious spirituality forms the ethical basis of a musical life. At the same time, such an attitude partakes of a questionable obscurantism that drives many musicians to reject violently any attempt to elucidate the links between music and the society of which it is a product.[11] This idealism and refusal to examine their own objective social function can lead musicians into unreflective capitulations to the

10. Ingrid Monson combines a personal familiarity with jazz music as a practice via the author's interviews with players, and a theoretically sophisticated analysis of the ways in which "musical sound" comes to constitute social meaning. See Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 211. Monson argues convincingly that "the interactive component of improvisation" institutes subjectivity in ways that "concretely recover agency in opposition to a foucauldian, poststructuralist vitiation of the subject" (p. 209).

11. In *Human, All Too Human,* Nietzsche, obliquely referring to Wagner, states: "When it comes to recognizing truths, the artist has a weaker morality than the thinker; on no account does he want his brilliant, profound interpretations of life to be taken from him, and he defends himself against sober, plain methods and results. Ostensibly, he is fighting for the higher divinity and meaning of man; in truth, he does not want to give up the *most effective* presuppositions for his art, that is the fantastic, the mythic, uncertain, extreme feeling for the symbolic, over-estimation of the individual, belief in something miraculous about genius: thus he thinks the continuation of his manner of creating is more important than a scientific dedication to truth in every form, however plain it may appear. . . . The artist remains a child or adolescent all his life, frozen in the position in which his artistic instinct first came upon him. Without wanting to, he will make it his task to take humanity back to its childhood; this is his glory, and also his limitation." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, ed. by Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge 1996), #146. Adorno's views concerning this theme can be found in Ch. 7 of SM.

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very exploitation their idealism condemns.

Secondly, there is the circumstantial fact that this attitude flies in the face of the mass of contrary testimony already mentioned — testimony regarding music as a socially significant process that has had a galvanizing effect within the black community throughout this century. Finally, this attitude, seemingly highly respectful to music, in fact does it a disservice, betraying the very principles upon which jazz functions. Inherent in this claim is an acceptance of jazz as an immediate totality that has no need of a conceptual nexus describing its existence and functioning within society. It is in the very nature of jazz to offer critical reactions and alternatives, whether via its often overt function as a music of protest, or within the structural modifications it has enacted on American music. This claim of jazz's status as "just music" is one more form of the long-standing belief in the social autonomy of music, an ideology that constitutes the cultural capital of musicians, justifying their position within society through an insistence on their economic independence as "free artists."

In order to decode the untold story in jazz, it is essential to re-examine Adorno's work. Its critical pronouncements on this music — in his eyes, a mere product of the Culture Industry — have led critics to ignore the implications the theoretical tools he developed hold for jazz. His analysis of jazz has been so widely criticized that it may seem perverse to take up his theories in defense of that music he so roundly condemned as mere commercial debasement of the artistic impulse. Although they have a certain shock value, his pronouncements on jazz often seem so ridiculous as to defy explanation (e.g., his claim that jazz is a fundamentally white music that lacks any rhythmic innovation or fundamental historical development). Even Adorno's later work, such as "Perennial Fashion — Jazz" or sections of the *Sociology of Music*, which both followed his stay in the US, all betray an astounding unfamiliarity with the music he roundly condemns. Adorno's pronouncements on jazz offer an ironic confirmation of his differentiation between true thought and mere opinion, devoid of experiential content: "The means by which opinion can become knowledge, is the relation of thought to its object. By satiating itself with its object, thought transforms and divests itself of the element of arbitrariness. . . . Stupidity triumphs whenever the mechanisms of thought run of their own accord, like an engine idling, when they substitute their own formalisms and systemic definitions in place of the matter itself."[12]

12. Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, tr. by Henry W. Pickford. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp.109-110. Cited hereafter as CM.

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The material of Adorno's aesthetic theory points the way beyond the author's biographical impasse. It is in the nature of thought as Adorno conceived it to move beyond its inherent limitations. In "Opinion Delusion Society," he writes: "The very organ of thinking, prudence, consists not only in the formal strength of the subjective faculty to form concepts, judgments, and conclusions correctly, but at the same time in the ability to apply this faculty to what is unlike it." To place Adorno's insights in contact with the objective contents of jazz would thus be to subject his musical reflection to its own criteria: "The moment called cathexis in psychology, thought's affective investment in the object, is not extrinsic to thought, not merely psychological, but rather the condition of its truth" (CM, p. 109).

The question of truth is fundamental to Adorno's musical aesthetics. He attempts to describe non-transcendental criteria for the "truthful" construction of musical objects that would instead arise immanently from within that object itself. In *Criteria of New Music,* he redirects Kant's notion of a "necessity" providing subjective universality to judgements of taste. Such a necessity, Kant claimed, gives to aesthetic objects the appearance of being governed by unknown laws, though the latter's existence is only a reasonable judgment based on an understanding of the law-like behavior of the aesthetic object. "Our search for musical criteria today should proceed along much the same paradoxical lines; in other words, we should search for an experience of necessity that imposes itself step by step, but which can make no claim to any transparent universal law" (SF, p. 148). Because this "truth-content" is unique to each artwork, it remains contingent and open to constant revision: "an infinitely sensitive and fragile logic, one that points to tendencies rather than fixed norms governing what should or should not be done" (*ibid.*). Yet, Adorno's subjective experience of musical composition leads him to a claim fundamental to his entire aesthetics: "The element of compulsion, the fact that something in a piece of music is as it is and cannot be any other way, is perfectly comprehensible, and is not a matter of an individual chance. It can be judged much as a composer makes precise judgments about what is right, insofar as he proceeds in a meaningful, rational manner" (SF, p. 149). This claim, which Adorno leaves open-ended ("Of course this idea allows for a certain latitude of rightness; there may be several solutions in any one instance"), typifies his musical aesthetics: rigorous, variegated philosophical reflection informed by concrete musical experience and insight.

Adorno's musical aesthetics locates within the musical object the contradiction that writers such as James Baldwin find existing between

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(African-American) cultural-musical initiates and (white) listeners unfamiliar with black musical discourse and its cultural referents.[13] If, following the analysis Adorno and Horkheimer developed in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, society grows increasingly hostile to subjective experience in its totalizing elimination of all forms of non-identity, the contradiction between subject and object finds expression within the artistic "monad" itself, independent of a composer's conscious volition. At the heart of this insight is the antinomical structure of the musical object: "Music resembles language in the sense that it is a temporal sequence of articulated sounds which are more than just sounds. . . . The succession of sounds is like logic: it can be right or wrong. But what has been said cannot be detached from the music. Music creates no semiotic system" (QF, p. 1). Adorno's "Music and Language: A Fragment," which opens the collection *Quasi una Fantasia*, belies the claim that his analysis of music relies on a crude, immediate reflection theory. In its six brief pages, Adorno explores the contradiction between two competing tendencies of music: that of expression and intention or the capacity to intend manifest narrative. If music's expressive force arises from its link to the voice, and thus to the utterance of human suffering, it is incapable of narrating that experience unambiguously; despite this, it produces narration.[14]

"Music and Language: A Fragment" ties the question of music's

13. Similarly, Adorno differentiates between a generalized regression of listening skills in essays such as "Commodity Music Analyzed" and an ideal listener, whose "productive imagination . . . [is] able to participate, as it were, in the process of composing as [s/he listens]" Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi Una Fantasia*, tr. by Rodney Livingstone. (London: Verso, 1998), p. 271. Cited hereafter as QF. Adorno's emphasis is thus on the constructive nature of listening, in contrast to Jean-Jacques Nattiez' understanding of a polymorphous, yet ultimately analytical "concentrated hearing" (Pierre Schaeffer's term). See Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 95-96. Cited hereafter as MD. Nattiez argues that this hearing can never correspond to "compositional intentions" (MD, p. 99). If Adorno seems to imply such a possibility, his persistent critique of psychologism and the ideological character of such putative "compositional intentions" forms a critique both of his own model of ideal listening and of the chimeric hope to "know the composer's reasons for a given disposition of his objects" still to be found in a certain musicology (MD, p. 96): "The way in which a work of art becomes what it is is irrelevant to the question of its quality. Only the work itself counts, not its origins. However, the banal argument that thinks itself qualified to judge artistic matters by producing the question 'Was this intentional?' can always be refuted if it is pointed out that what was held to be the calculated intention of the composer, or the despicable intellectualism of the critic, is grounded in reality in the depths of the form itself" (SF, pp. 60-61).

14. Here, Adorno is in agreement with more recent semiological analyses of music by Carolyn Abbate and Jean-Jacques Nattiez: "Music is not a narrative, but an incitement to make a narrative, to comment, to analyze" (MD 128).

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extra-musical signification in a knot of contradictions that must be kept in mind when one comes upon his seemingly unmediated socio-musical formalist metaphors.[15] If the question of musical meaning has traditionally moved between the mystical expressionism of composers such as Scriabin and the formalist interiority of a Pierre Boulez, Adorno mediates these two extremes each through the other. Music gains its referentiality through its very interiority, i.e., its monad-like nature that prevents it from communicating unequivocally.[16] Adorno transforms Edgar Varèse' arch-formalist argument that "music is not able to express anything other than itself" (cited in MD, p. 108), invoking music's innate ambiguity. "Music points to true language in the sense that content is apparent in it, but it does so at the cost of unambiguous meaning, which has migrated to the languages of intentionality" (QF, p. 3). Thus, for Adorno, music is not devoid of concepts. Music possesses what he terms ciphers, "things that come very close to the 'primitive concepts' found in epistomology" (QF, p. 2). Structural processes, such as harmonic functions, "cadential progressions [and] melodic figures," as well as their critique in the procedures of Viennese modernism, form the substance of these concepts. If "the identity of these musical concepts [lies] in their own nature and not in a signified outside them," (QF, p. 2) it should come as no surprise that such a postulation of "identity" is hardly Adorno's last word. Here, as in all of his work, he goes on to underscore the non-identity already present in the putatively self-identical musical object: society.

15. For all of his attempts to mediate the extremes of an immanent, musicological critique with a more general social theory, a chasm often separates these two procedures in his writing. Nowhere is this more blatant than at the point in his essay *Criteria of New Music* when he passes from one to the other in his discussion of musical meaning. From a highly abstract discussion of immanent musical meaning, he suddenly turns to vague, undetermined metaphors of social content: "As a criterion, it is not sufficient to establish whether meaning enables the individual sensuous elements to transcend themselves; what is needed is a decision about the substantial content of this transcendence. In Beethoven, for example, this substantial content can be summed up under the concept of humanity, such that the whole takes precedence over individuals existing merely for themselves, of whom it nevertheless consists" (SF, p. 163). Adorno too often neglects to give particular, musical content to such abstractions, abandoning the stress upon mediation he so often adopted.

16. Adorno evokes the Leibnizian monad on many occasions. One of its most crucial senses within the former's thought is to serve as an image of the mediation of larger social contradictions within the microcosm of the aesthetic object. According to Leibniz: "This interconnection or accommodation of all created things to each other, and each to all the others, brings it about that each simple substance has relations that express all the others, and consequently, that each simple substance is a perpetual, living mirror of the universe." See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Monadology," in *Philosophical Essays*, ed. and tr. by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), p. 220.

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"Form can only be the form of a content" (QF, p. 6). If music is defined as a semiological system by its uniquely self-referential nature,[17] it nonetheless only comes into existence in its exteriorization, in the process of its sonic creation and reception.[18] As communication, musical expression transforms the interiority of its structures, placing them into contact with what is different from them, yet in some as yet insubstantantial way isomorphic to them. "Every musical phenomena points to something beyond itself by reminding us of something, contrasting itself with something or arousing our expectations" (QF, p. 6). In this process, music becomes more than the mere self-sameness of its formal structures. In fact those structures themselves can generate their own *Aufhebung*. If they arise from needs of what could be termed the composition-in-process, rather than being passively accepted as abstract compositional categories (sonata form, etc.), they become "the thought process by which content is defined" (QF, p. 6). Musical form, through concentration and self-reflection within its interiority, moves beyond itself; Adorno's description presents its animated, life-like character as a "mind" processing and reflecting the world of which it is a product. How this might occur is beyond the scope of Adorno's brief "fragment," and is addressed in the immanent analysis of musical texts that occurs in his longer monographs.

Following Hegel, Adorno insists that any analysis must be based on the immersion of the critical-musical subject within the substantial, determinate contents of the aesthetic object. In this view, insight into the extra-musical contents of a piece of music can only arise from the materiality and specificity of that music. Adorno thus foresees and addresses those critics who would accuse him of a simplistic analogical model of the sociology of music: "The nonconceptual nature of music deprives us of the kind of evidence for our insights that in the case of traditional literature appears to be legitimated by its contents. Hence assertions about the intrinsic ideological

17. In this respect, Adorno and Nattiez share similar conceptions of musical signification. The latter marks his opposition to Emile Benveniste's notion of musical signification by pointing, as does Adorno, to music's *dissimilarity* with language: for Benveniste to claim that "'the basic unit, the note, is not a sign' . . . the notion of the sign must be limited to 'something that refers to the outside world'" (MD, pp. 115-116). Where Adorno departs from Nattiez is in his insistence on the processes that mediate what for Nattiez are two abstract, opposing tendencies of musicological analysis: "The formalist-absolutist position: music means itself" and "The expressionist-absolutist position: music is capable of referring to the non-musical" (MD, p. 110).

18. Indeed, it is only in its transcendence of formal immanence that Adorno sees a musical object becoming a work of art: "It is a work of art only if its manifest appearance points to something beyond itself" (SF 197).

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character of music are constantly in danger of being reduced to mere analogies. The only remedy here is a technical and physiognomical analysis describing formal features as elements of an organized musical meaning (or their absence) and goes on to infer social significance from those features. The task is to articulate the social meaning of the formal constituents of music — its logic, in short. . . . The precondition of a productive sociology of music is to understand the language of music" (SF, p. 4).

While Adorno applies and develops this methodology in his studies of composers such as Mahler and Berg, the specificities of his analysis of Viennese modernism are beyond the scope of this discussion.[19] Instead, those procedures can be taken as a sort of toolkit, one that might hold useful implications for an understanding of jazz. Adorno's concept of the historicity of musical material has at least two important implications for an understanding of the function of jazz in African-American society. First, it implies that jazz is operating as a vernacular technique of historiography, encoding a culture's memories within those practices it has developed out of an oral-based tradition: "Authentic [art works] are the unconscious historiography of their epoch. In the end, this is what constitutes their mediation as a form of cognition. The historical moment is constitutive of art works: the authentic ones are those which surrender themselves unconditionally to the material content of their time, without the presumption of timelessness" (SM, p. 261).

The way social content specifically infiltrates musical practice, allowing it to function as what Adorno terms a "seismogram of reality" (SM180) is through the existence of musical material as a historically mediated entity, pre-formed by society, which is absorbed and explored by the musician in the process of schooling and artistic reflection. For the musician has undergone a long process of learning culturally pre-formed materials which, and this is the point Adorno makes indirectly, "mimic" social contradictions, both as survival and defense mechanisms against social oppression. Musical practice as such does not directly confront society as social realism, but rather it is the criticism through indirection that Henry Louis Gates calls Signifyin(g).[20] The musician's appropriation of the pre-existing, socially-determined body of musical material known as standards is the most obvious way they carry out their vernacular historiography.

19. See Max Paddison, *Adorno's Aesthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), for a useful overview of Adorno's musicological analyses.

20. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

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Adorno goes so far as to claim that the musical composition is in fact a "more impartial historian than are documents." This claim is based on the capacity of a given musical composition to reflect the contradictions of the society which produced it: "Society as a problem or context of problems, as the entirety of its antagonisms appears immanently in the musical material as problems of musical logic, of form." Adorno's theory looks for the ways in which the form of a text encodes the contradictions or antinomies of a given society. "Music is ideological only insofar as it is a false consciousness. Accordingly, a sociology of music would have to set in at the fissures and fractures of what happens in it. . . ." (SM, p. 63).

Again and again in the history of jazz, the music's greatest practitioners have offered technical solutions within their musical material to a more generalized existential problem confronting African-Americans in this century: the divided, double subjectivity first theorized by W. E. B. Dubois. Musicians such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Art Tatum, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Anthony Braxton, to name only a few, each developed complex, original aesthetic practices.[21] Each can also be said to have developed their practice as a means of surviving and flourishing in a largely hostile environment; these composers found highly personalized means of uniting the two cultures, one blues-based, the other technocratic, that uneasily must find ways to coexist in a single subject. As Dubois put it: "One ever feels his two-ness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."[22] Combining blues-based techniques of instrumental vocalization and improvisation with highly developed harmonic and theoretical practices has offered individual solutions to an existential problem fundamental to the Black Diaspora. The concrete analysis of such practices remains to be undertaken in studies of jazz striving to mediate the specificity of musical creation and invention within that music's profound and evident links to socio-historical experience.

Adorno's theory of musical material offers a means of theorizing the utopianism jazz has constructed so often, without falling into the simplistic evocation of extra-musical phenomena. Ben Sidrin argued that in cultural contexts such as pre-1960s America, where freedom of expression was largely denied to one group by those who controlled the flow of cultural

21. On Braxton, see Ronald M Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

22. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet Classic: 1995), p. 45.

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capital, people tend to avoid direct confrontation when it threatens to bring violent repression in all but the most extreme situations.[23] Instead, protest tends to be encoded in indirect forms that avoid open conflict. Jazz is one of the primary vehicles of this critique, functioning through a combination of elaborate theoretical reflection and vernacular, oral-based performance techniques. Thus, it not only provided a critical analysis of social conditions in the same manner that Adorno argues of Schoenberg's music, but it may have played as much of a mobilizing, revolutionary function in African-American culture as the texts and speeches of, say, James Baldwin or Malcolm X. The importance of vernacular means of communication in African-American culture thus encouraged the development of both modes of critique based on non-European practices, and of a class of organic intellectuals who offer alternatives to Western models of the engaged intellectual.

John Coltrane's music is often thought of as a spiritual, freely-creative epiphany of jazz, and his own religious world-view can be invoked to support this perception. Yet, in examining his artistic development and some of his statements, it becomes clear that Coltrane constructed his music on a thorough mastery of historical musical material, and that his musical evolution was predicated upon the working through of the problems this material presented. An Adornian musical aesthetics would not seek to erase or debunk the spiritual content of such music, but rather to overcome a facile recourse to vague impressionism. In this view, insight into musical spirituality would occur through an immersion within its extreme opposite, technical procedure.[24]

Each phase of Coltrane's development manifests his focused attention to problems of musical material. His exploration of blues and bebop vocabulary from 1957-1960 offers Coltrane's first technical representation of two competing strands of African-American culture: that of a vernacular, blues-based inheritance with the rationalized harmonic structures and functions of Western harmonic practice. The initial measures of his

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23. Ben Sidrin, *Black Talk* (New York: Da Capo, 1971).

24. "The theoretical idea has to penetrate into the blindest center of the monads, which is what works of art are, into those of their aspects that are the opposite of spiritual and yet remain in control of them as spirit. The site of the philosophy of art is its technological force fields: the tensions that every work of art objectively contains within itself are also the medium of its truth and hence of philosophical interpretation. A valid aesthetics would have to show how the spiritual substance of a work of art — what traditional philosophy called the artistic idea — is constituted in the life of its components, in the way in which they continually modify each other, forming ever new constellations" (SF, p. 124).

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famous solo on "Blue Train" confront two aesthetic representations of these stances. A plaintive initial blues phrase (measures –1 through 3) rocks back and forth between the first two degrees of the tonic Eb chord, developing through the first nine measures of that initial chorus with the addition of only a few grace notes to that same blues phrase.[25] Suddenly, in the tenth measure, Coltrane explodes into a vertical arpeggiation of sixteenth notes that superimpose a rapid series of distinct chord substitutions upon the slower underlying V-I progression. Finally, the last two notes of this opening chorus return to the blues voice with which the chorus began, ending on the tonic F. Again and again throughout this brilliant solo, Coltrane moves between a kinetic exploration of hierarchical chord structures following a highly developed logic of chord substitution, and simple, blues-based phrasing. Coltrane's construction avoids a false synthesis of this contradictory material, the saccharine positivity of those products of the Culture Industry that smack of mere wish fulfillment and the illusion of reconciliation amidst a historical context of conflict and contradiction. Instead, he steadfastly develops an aesthetic representation of social aporia invested within the musical materials his gaze so forcibly penetrates.[26]

In his solos of this period, chords logically stacked upon chords intensify, harmonically enrich, and finally overwhelm a basic inherited structure like the standard blues form, with Coltrane exploring all the possible substitution techniques available to him in the particular historical moment and field of Hard Bop, circa 1957. True to the logic of the vernacular imperative, however, the brilliance of Coltrane's "Blue Train" solo lies not only in its overwhelming mastery of musical material in

25. Cf. John Coltrane, *Improvised Saxophone Solos*. Transcribed by Don Sickler. (New York: CPP Belwin, 1979).

26. Coltrane's music addresses the problem of autonomously generated form Adorno recognized as that of all musical procedure in the absence of transcendent aesthetic norms and continuing social contradiction: "How can the particular become authoritative without proposing any general, objective purpose that is itself subjectively reflected? In other words, how can subjectivity become objective without force or fraud? The antinomy that this question points to is dictated by the relation of art, indeed all forms of human spirit, to society. A valid order of art does not appear possible in the absence of a constitutive social order that the artistic one would resemble. Subject and object cannot be reconciled in art as long as they are not reconciled in the real world, and the present state of affairs is the straight opposite of that, increasingly antagonistic, despite the illusion of unity that is created by the overwhelming power of objective relations over each and every subject. Precisely because of the deception involved in such positivity, however, the idea of art today is to transcend the existing society critically, and to uphold the concrete image of a nonconformist, meaningful possibility. . . . This is registered by the composer's work without any need for him to be conscious of it himself" (SF 142).

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terms of instrumental technique and harmonic sophistication,[27] but achieves something more than technical display via its immersion of consummate artistic practice within subjective experience. Every note of this solo is vocalized, at once drenched with experience, yet gaining its force of expression from unparalleled technical facility. Yet, like many others Coltrane composed in this period, this solo has a hurried, unsettled quality to it, as though he were rushing to fit in all he had to say (or all that his material dictated that he say) within the small space of twelve measure choruses. Coltrane's entire approach to improvisation, as he explained, can be seen as the necessary working through of the problems his musical material presented to him, whether that takes two minutes or two hours of improvisation. Only then could he, as Miles Davis had exhorted him, "take the horn out of [his] mouth."

In the period of "Giant Steps" and "Countdown" from 1959-60, there occurs the eventual uniting of form and content, where each composition becomes the grounds not simply for thematic invention lain upon an inherited form, but in which form itself is constantly called into question and becomes thematic material. During this period, Coltrane strives for a maximum concentration of harmonic movement within compositional structure, borrowing a harmonic form from Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Chords and Scales* that moves through equidistant, highly unrelated key signatures. He then accelerates this movement, culminating in the terrifyingly fast "Countdown," redefining at a stroke the objective standards of minimal jazz technique for future generations of musicians.[28] A third phase comes full-circle, standing in dramatic opposition to "Giant Steps"; here, static harmonic fields decompose Western hierarchical harmonic models via fourth based, pentatonic, and symmetrical scalar and harmonic

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27. For an example of this process, see David Baker's transcription of Coltrane's solo to "Straight No Chaser" on the LP *Milestones,* where the intensification of the Bebop language is strained to its utmost limits through various processes of rhythmic and harmonic condensation that constantly threaten to explode Coltrane's composition within a composition. David N. Baker, *The Jazz Style of John Coltrane: A Musical and Historical Perspective* (Miami: CPP/Belwin, 1980). Lewis Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1998) is the first full-length study to do justice to Coltrane's music, combining wide-ranging biographical scholarship with insightful, detailed musicological analysis of every aspect and period of his production. Cited hereafter as JC. See pp. 114-131 of Porter's study for a description of the musical forms and devices that Coltrane developed during the period of *Blue Train.*

28. Here, Baker's transcription of "Countdown" is illustrative. See JC pp.145-158 for a thorough description of the historical and musicological aspects of the "Giant Steps" series of compositions.

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material from the classic Quartet's modal period, 1960-1965.[29] Finally, Coltrane develops the technique of cellular motivic development within a "free" improvisation that Lewis Porter has examined as a highly developed compositional practice. In this period, autonomously generated structural limitations guide the articulation of musical material in recordings such as *Interstellar Space* from 1967 (JC 277-288). As Adorno claims for Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, Coltrane here develops a sound-image of an autonomous subject in which formal structures are generated following the demands of each composition.[30] Coltrane's final compositions thus come to stand as objective representations of a recovered autonomy. They construct this model of the autonomous subjectivity that can be had within objective products, abandoning received formal procedures to articulate a highly concrete notion of freedom. This image of freedom, for all its complexity, has in fact been understood as such throughout the vernacular community to which it spoke from its moment of articulation.[31]

Jazz has often functioned as a staging ground for the mediation of two Adornian aesthetic categories: mimesis and art's "semblance character" — its constructed, non-natural quality which, as artistic form, draws it away from the natural.[32] If the description of the mimetic, expressive qualities of jazz is a cliché stretching from Louis Armstrong to Coltrane and beyond, its truth-character gains its force via the subjective experience embodied in these musician's material practices. Yet, the musical materials they inherited — song forms, scalar and harmonic and rhythmic material, expressive techniques, etc. — thoroughly mediate any "direct" impression of reality the artist could hope to achieve. Music, in particular, implicates the power of representation to serve as a receptacle for what it

29. Andrew White's transcription of solos such as "Out of this world" from the album *Coltrane* are relevant, though White does not engage the depth of analysis typical of Baker's work, the author instead pursuing the Herculean labor of a transcription of all of Coltrane's recorded output. See Andrew N. White, *The Works of John Coltrane: Volumes One through Ten; Four Hundred Twenty-One Saxophone Solos* (Washington: Andrew's Musical Enterprises, 1977).

30. What Adorno terms "une musique informelle" would be "a type of music which has discarded all forms which are external or abstract or which confront it in an inflexible way. At the same time, although such music should be completely free of anything irreducibly alien to itself or superimposed on it, it should nevertheless constitute itself in an objectively compelling way, in the musical substance itself, and not in terms of external laws" (QF, p. 272).

31. See Gerald Early, "Ode to John Coltrane: A Jazz Musician's Influence on African American Culture," in *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer 1999), pp. 370-385.

32. See the section of *Aesthetic Theory* entitled "Semblance and Expression" for a further discussion of this distinction.

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is not: life, the spirit John Coltrane feared might not shine through in solos that (as he once stated) constantly threatened to degenerate into mere technical exercises. The constructed semblance character of Coltrane's music — in which it so forcefully addresses experiences of suffering, joy, and struggle, from which its forms and structures are unavoidably alienated — is striking, as it manages to maintain the image of freedom through technical, virtuosic means.

The primary theoretical problem addressed by jazz composers in this century has been autonomy. An Adornian aesthetics of jazz reveals this search for autonomy as effected in and through an immersion in the materiality of musical processes, moving beyond merely biographical or topical references to song titles and interviews or impressionistic descriptions of playing styles. If jazz has been one of the most highly developed and effective articulations of a vernacular theory of autonomy, this force arises precisely from the improviser/composer's "exact imagination," to redirect Adorno's term.[33] The autonomy Coltrane's music describes is neither purely subjective nor objective, but rather that of a critical-musical subject drawing the force of its reconfigurations via a saturation with its object. "Thinking" — and true musical practice constitutes for Adorno a primary locus for the objective appearance of thought — "is no mere subjective activity but... essentially the dialectical process between subject and object in which both poles first mutually determine the other" (CM, p. 109). The "truth" of a given composition resides in the degree to which the composing subject is given over to the "primacy of the object," constructing a solution adequate to the demands a given composition sets forth. Think of the negotiation of multiple, rapidly changing heterogeneous key-centers in Coltrane's "Countdown," or the articulation of a non-tonal improvisation via cellular motivic development in *Interstellar Space*. Coltrane, who reconfigured the dominant practice of jazz perhaps four times in the last decade of his life, perfectly exemplifies Adorno's observation that "music's relation to its form is dialectical. It catches fire on those forms, melts them down, makes them vanish and return in vanishing" (SM, p. 26).

Coltrane's music stands as one of the greatest achievements of vernacular modernism. Coltrane consciously appropriated and redirected the currents of European modernism to what Albert Murray has called the "vernacular imperative" of African-American culture. If, in Adorno's reading of Schoenberg, "art uses the rationality of the world as a means of

33. See Shierry Weber Nicholson, *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), pp. 18-19.

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freeing itself from the repression of means-ends rationality," the same could be said of Coltrane, who tirelessly sought out the objective structures of American heteronomy in the inherited forms of his musical material, using those same tools to undo their domination. Coltrane's work, as does Schoenberg's, questions Western rationality from within, using its own tools to explode it. Coltrane took the material of hierarchical Western harmony and continuously pushed it beyond its limits, not through recourse to a simplistic, open-ended freedom, but by immersing subjective experience within those limitations and determinately reconfiguring material with which he had become familiar as no other musician through a single-minded dedication to his art.

The full implications of this type of organic cultural critique can become apparent if the tools Adorno developed are selectively and critically appropriated and applied to specific, concrete material. To avoid collapsing into either a facile subjectivism or a blind objectivity, critical reflection must orchestrate a dynamic tension between a rigorous attention to the musical object and an immanent critique of the extra-musical forces that determine it. With such a dialectical analysis of jazz, the most compelling implication of this music might fleetingly reappear: the reflective, articulate, determinate creation of freedom.

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*What is Sovereignty?**

Alain de Benoist

The concept of sovereignty is one of the most complex in political science, with many definitions, some totally contradictory.[1] Usually, sovereignty is defined in one of two ways. The first definition applies to supreme public power, which has the right and, in theory, the capacity to impose its authority in the last instance. The second definition refers to the holder of legitimate power, who is recognized to have authority. When national sovereignty is discussed, the first definition applies, and it refers in particular to independence, understood as the freedom of a collective entity to act. When popular sovereignty is discussed, the second definition applies, and sovereignty is associated with power and legitimacy.

* Translated by Julia Kostova from "Qu'est-ce que la souveraineté? in *Éléments*, No. 96 (November 1999), pp. 24-35.

1. Cf. Charles Merriam, *History of the Theory of Sovereignty since Rousseau* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1900); Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State* (London: New Left Books, 1974); Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Bertrand de Jouvenel, *De la souveraineté* (Paris: Génior, 1955); *In Defense of Sovereignty*, ed. by W. J. Stankiewicz (London: Oxford University Press, 1969); Joseph Camillieri and Jim Falk, *The End of Sovereignty?* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1992); A. H. Chayes, *The New Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, ed. by Thomas J. Biersteker and C. Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Bertrand Badie, *Un monde sans souveraineté. Les États entre ruse et responsabilité* (Paris: Fayard, 1999). Discussion of this subject has become so confused that the notion of sovereignty tends to lose its political character, as is the case with Patricia Mishe, who claims that only the earth is sovereign. ("Ecological Security and the Need to Reconceptualize Sovereignty," in *Alternatives* No. 14, pp. 390-391), or with Robert Garner, who wants to extend sovereignty to animals ("Ecology and Animal Rights. Is Sovereignty Anthropocentric?" in Laura Brace and John Hoffman, eds., *Reclaiming Sovereignty* [London: Pinter, 1997]).

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Sovereignty and Political Authority

On the international level, sovereignty means independence, i.e., non-interference by external powers in the internal affairs of another state. International norms are based on the principle of the sovereign equality of independent states; international law excludes interference and establishes universally-accepted rules. Thus, sovereignty is eminently rational, if not dialectical, since the sovereignty of a state depends not only on the autonomous will of its sovereign, but also on its standing *vis-a-vis* other sovereign states. From this perspective, one can say that the sovereignty of any single state is the logical consequence of the existence of several sovereign states.[2]

It is thus a serious mistake to assume that sovereignty is possible only within the framework of the classic type of state, i.e., a nation-state, as do representatives of the "realist" school, such as Alan James and F. H. Hinsley, or neo-Marxist theoreticians like Justin Rosenberg.[3] One should not confuse the concepts of nation and state, which do not necessarily belong together, or assume that the concept of sovereignty was formulated clearly only in terms of the theory of the state. Closer to the truth is John Hoffman's assertion that "sovereignty has been an insoluble problem ever since it became associated with the state."[4] Even though a concept of sovereignty did not exist before the 16th century, it does not follow that the phenomenon did not exist in political reality, and that it could not have been conceptualized differently. For example, Aristotle does not mention sovereignty, but the fact that he insists on the necessity for a supreme power shows that he was familiar with the idea, since any supreme power — *kuphian aphen* with the Greeks; *summum imperium* with the Romans — is sovereign by definition. Sovereignty is not related to any particular form of government or to any particular political organization; on the contrary, it is inherent in any form of political authority.

The problem with sovereignty appeared at the end of the Middle Ages, when the question posed was no longer only about the best form of government or the limits of political authority, but about the relation

2. This is the starting point of the debate between the classic "realist" school, which defines sovereignty as "centralized power, exercising its authority over a territory" (Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948)), and the so-called "dependalist" school.

3. Alan James, *Sovereign Statehood* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986); F. H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society* (London: Verso, 1994).

4. John Hoffman, *Sovereignty* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), and *Beyond the State* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995). See also, Andrew Vincent, *Theories of the State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 32.

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between the government and the people, i.e., the relation between ruler and ruled in a political community. This is the question that Jean Bodin (1520-1596) attempted to answer in *La Republique*, published in 1576.[5] Bodin did not invent sovereignty, but he was the first to make a conceptual analysis of it and to propose a systematic formulation. He did not initiate this project by observing a real state, but by attempting to restore public order, which had been damaged by the religious wars, and by legitimating the emancipation of French kings from the Pope and the emperor. This is why Bodin's doctrine naturally constituted the ideology of territorial realms seeking to gain independence from the empire, and to transform the power that had obtained in royal dominance over feudal lords.

Jean Bodin: Ideologist of Territorial Realms

In *La République*, Bodin begins by reminding his readers that sovereignty (*majestas*), the foundation of his entire system, is a prerogative of authority, being itself one of the presuppositions of politics. Like the majority of the authors of his time, he asserts that a government is strong only when it is legitimate, and he emphasizes the fact that a government's actions always should be in accord with certain norms, which are determined by justice and reason. Nevertheless, he understands that such considerations do not suffice to clarify the idea of sovereign power. Thus, he asserts that the source of power lies in the law, and that the capacity to make and break laws belongs only to the sovereign: the power to legislate and to rule are identical. The conclusion Bodin reaches is radical: since the prince is not subject to his own decisions or decrees, he is above the law.

This formula was already the work of Roman jurists: "*Princeps legibus solutus*" [The prince i not bound by the law]. Bodin writes: "Those who are sovereign must not be subject to the authority of anyone else. . . . This is why the law says that the prince must be excluded from the power of law. . . . The law of the prince depends exclusively upon his pure and sincere will."[6] In this case, it is sovereign power that allows the prince to impose laws that do not apply to him, because the exercise of power does not oblige him to have the consent of his subjects — sovereignty is totally independent of the subjects on whom laws are imposed. Richelieu later would say that "the prince is the master of the formalities of law."

5. Jean Bodin, *The Six Bookes of a Commonweale*, a facsimile reprint of the English translation of 1606, corrected and supplemented in the light of a new comparison with the French and Latin texts, edited with an Introduction by Kenneth Douglas McRae (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

6. *Ibid.*, II, 2.

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Because of this legislative power, supreme authority had to be unique and absolute, which is why Bodin's definition of sovereignty is the "absolute and perpetual power of a republic,"[7] i.e., this power is unlimited in the sphere of human affairs. Sovereignty is absolute in the sense that the sovereign is not subject to law; on the contrary, he may decree and annul laws at will. Conversely, the ability to make laws requires sovereignty to be absolute ("it cannot be cut into pieces," Bodin says), because the power to legislate is indivisible. The remainder of the political prerogatives of the sovereign are dependent upon this initial affirmation. One could say that the fundamental characteristic of sovereignty is that it grants to the prince, who is subject to his will alone, the power of not being tied to or dependent upon anyone. His power is not delegated, temporary, or accountable to anyone; if his power depended upon anyone but himself, either internally or externally, he would not have the power to make law. He no longer would be sovereign.

Thus, Bodin's sovereignty is totally exclusive: by giving the king the role of unique legislator, it grants the state an unlimited and original authority. Consequently, a sovereign state is defined as one whose prince does not depend on anyone but himself. This implies that a nation is formed within a state, and that it is identified with this state. For Bodin, a country might eventually be defined in terms of its history, its culture, its identity, or its morals, but, politically, what constitutes a state as such is its sovereignty: the absolute power that forms the republic as a political entity, unique and absolute. The state must be one and indivisible, because it represents the legislative monopoly of the sovereign. Local autonomies are allowed, but only if they do not constrain the authority of the prince. Actually, they are always more limited. The state is a monad, while the prince is "separated from the people," i.e., placed in an isolation bordering on solipsism.

Obviously, this new theory of sovereignty was crucial. On the one hand, it dissociated civil from political society, a theme which became crucial at the start of the 18th century; on the other, it laid the foundation for the modern nation-state, which is characterized by the indivisibility and absoluteness of its power. With Bodin, political theory became modern.

For Bodin, sovereignty is inseparable from the idea of a political society that abolishes particular ties and loyalties, and bases itself on the ruins of concrete communities. Implicitly, the political bond already creates a governmental contract in which all mediations between the members of

7. *Ibid.*, I, 8.

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society (individuals) and power are eliminated. This rupture between pre-political communities and political society was adopted first by the absolute monarchy, and then by the nation-state. The state is defined primarily by its homogeneous character, and this homogeneity can be either natural (cultural or ethnic) or synthetic (through relegation of collective differences within the private sphere). In other words, given the implicit egalitarianism ensuing from the fact that the model is based on a direct and unconditional bond between ruler and ruled, Bodin's concept of sovereignty redefined "the people" as being uniquely composed of individuals, equally alienated from sovereign power.

Divine Absolutism Becomes Royal Absolutism

It is not difficult to detect the religious foundations of Bodin's doctrine. Bodin's understanding of political power is merely a profane transposition of the absolute way God and the Pope exercise power over Christians, even though he denounces the medieval concept of power as merely a delegation of God's authority. For Bodin, the prince no longer is satisfied to hold power by "divine right." By granting himself the power to decree and annul laws, he acts like God. He forms a distinct entity, ruling the social body in the same way that God governs the cosmos. Thus, the sovereign's absolute rectitude is nothing more than the transposition into the political sphere of the Cartesian God, who can do everything except desire evil. Surreptitiously, sovereignty became infallible. In other words, Bodin makes sovereignty profane by taking it away from God, and then makes it again sacred in a profane form: he takes leave of God's monopolistic and absolute sovereignty and ends up with the monopolistic and absolute sovereignty of the state. All of modernity resides in this ambiguity: on the one hand, political power is secularized; on the other, the sovereign, now identified with the state, becomes a person granted quasi-divine political power. This confirms Carl Schmitt's theory, according to which: "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts."[8]

It is important to note that Bodin's theory of sovereignty does not imply any particular type of regime. Bodin prefers monarchy, since power is naturally more concentrated, but he emphasizes that the exercise of sovereignty is equally compatible with aristocracy and democracy, although the danger of division of power is much greater. It is equally

8. Carl Scmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, translated by George Schwab (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 36.

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significant that the appearance of an indivisible sovereignty, excluding any limits or controls, was accompanied by the strong intervention of state jurists. The direct heir of 13th century legists, whose work allowed royalty to impose itself on feudal lords, Bodin identifies political power with the capacity to make laws. However, he adds that the sovereign, although not bound by the laws he decrees, can still be bound by a contract, a treaty, or even by his subjects in what today is called a constitution. As Julien Freund notes: "This makes Bodin see sovereignty no longer only as a phenomenon of power, but also of right."[9] And this is what allows certain liberals to claim to be followers of Bodin.

The problem with sovereignty is differently posed with Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). While, in Bodin's theory, the idea of absolute sovereignty is oriented explicitly against feudal power, which implies granting the prince authority independent of his subjects' consent, for Hobbes, it results from a meditation on the destructive character of the "state of nature." As is well-known, Hobbes was the first to invoke a social contract based on the rationality of individuals. He says that individuals have decided to enter society and to place themselves under the authority of a prince in order to end the "war of all against all," which is characteristic of the "state of nature." Thus, Hobbes introduced the concept of the consent of the governed, but the conclusions he drew from this went even further than Bodin. While Bodin maintains a certain duality between the sovereign and the people, Hobbes erases it completely. By entering society, individuals agree to give up entirely their sovereignty in favor of the prince, which is the opposite of Rousseau's social contract. With Hobbes, the price of security is obedience; the people are fused within the sovereign, whose authority is assimilated with the individual wills. Thus, it could be said that the state "swallows" the people (unlike in Rousseau, where, through the general will, the people "swallow" the state).

Thomas Hobbes: Sovereignty Reinforced

Not only unbound by the reciprocity of contract, since he did not sign it, but, also, since his power is derived from the rational will of all, the sovereign has the right to require total obedience from everyone. Since his legitimacy stems from the fact that the members of society have forfeited their sovereignty voluntarily, he depends neither on persons nor situations, but stands on right and law. The people cannot oppose him since,

9. Julien Freund, *L'essence du politique* (Paris: Sirey, 1965), p. 118.

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not owing anything to anyone, he cannot be dispossessed of his authority. Better yet, he is the only one who retains the unlimited freedom of the state of nature. His sovereignty is thus equally indivisible and absolute. As with Bodin, sovereignty for Hobbes is completely unitary and identified with the state; any division or fragmentation of power is considered to be the cause of instability and political separation.[10]

Fair enough, there is something paradoxical in this modern formulation of sovereignty. In fact, both Bodin and Hobbes distinguish between tyranny and sovereignty, but they are able to do so only because they specify the objective limits of sovereignty, even while defining it as indivisible and absolute.[11] This limitation might reside in the prince's obligation to respect certain natural or divine laws, or in the finality of power (serving the common good without infringing on the rights of the members of society), or in the criteria of the legitimate exercise of power: for Bodin, it is the law; for Hobbes, it results from individual consent. This entirely unexpected theoretical conclusion emerges even from the dynamics of absolutism.

Another contradiction in Bodin stems from the fact that, to the extent that sovereignty constitutes an unlimited authority, the political community presumably constitutes the relation of ruler and ruled, despite the distinction between them, as it is precisely this relation that gives the prince the power to promulgate laws in a sovereign manner. In other words, the more autonomous the state, the more problematic the exercise of sovereignty. Conversely, if the public sphere has unlimited authority over the private sphere, the distinction between the two becomes relative. This contradiction creates a widening gap between state sovereignty and popular sovereignty.

The French Revolution: Continuity and No Rupture

The French Revolution preserved the very content of the concept of sovereignty embodied in the absolute monarchy, and took credit for giving it back to the nation. Hence the difficulty for the republican tradition to reconcile the first two articles of the Declaration of Rights, which affirmed the pre-eminence of universal individual rights, with the third article, which decreed that the nation is the supreme authority: "The principle of sovereignty resides essentially in the nation; no body, no individual can exercise authority not emanating from it." The idea of absolute sovereignty not only remained constant from the *ancien régime* to the Revolution, but the

10. Hobbes writes in *Leviathan* (1651): "A kingdome divided in itselfe cannot stand."
11. See Preston King, *Ideology of Order. A Comparative Analysis of Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 79.

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revolutionary idea of the pre-eminence of national sovereignty was also stressed from the beginning of the movement, i.e., prior to 1792 or 1793, and, thus, before the Jacobinist party came to power.[12] The key moment can be traced to the unilateral decision of the people ("teirs-état") in 1789 to initiate a process of verification of the mandates of the deputies, which launched the process of transformation of the general states into a national assembly, as well as the process leading to the political sovereignty of the deputies.

A discussion arose concerning the question of whether the common people should be represented in a Popular Assembly or in a National Assembly. Siéyès' faction, which urged the communes to constitute a "National Assembly," opposed the Mirabeau faction, which proposed the name "Assembly of the People's Representatives." The rivalry between the two factions revealed a difficulty in defining the "nation." Eventually, Siéyès' proposition was accepted, while Mirabeau's was rejected as harmful to the right of the nation. Siéyès considered the nation to be "a body of members, living under a common law," a rigorously homogeneous body, whose foundation is separated from any pre-political determination. It was to this body, and only to this body, that sovereignty should be returned: "The nation is before all, it is the origin of all. Its will is always legal, it is the law itself."[13] On June 17, 1789, the name "National Assembly" was adopted, based on the assumption that the representation of the nation must be "one and indivisible." Since the general will was embodied in the legislative body, it followed that national representation *is* the nation. From this moment on, sovereignty became an attribute of the nation and was transferred from the "the top" to the National Assembly. Thereafter, the "nation" corresponded to the space of the collective sovereignty incarnated in the National Assembly. Fundamentally, revolutionary sovereignty did not originate with the appearance of the electoral body, but simply represented a transfer of royal sovereignty: the nation was said to be sovereign, it was a *fait accompli*, and it acquired legitimacy even before the citizen statute was discussed.

The 1791 Constitution went even further. It specified that "sovereignty is indivisible, inalienable, and imprescriptible" (Chapter III, Article 1). In

12. This insight is one of the merits of the recently published book by Ladan Boroumand, who came to this conclusion following a meticulous study of the texts. See Ladan Boroumand, *La guerre des principes. Les assemblées révolutionnaires face aux droits de l'homme et à la souveraineté de la nation, mai 1789-juillet 1794* (Paris: Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1999).

13. Emmanuel-Joseph Siéyès, *Qu'est-ce que le tiers-état?* [1788] (Geneva: Droz, 1970), p. 180.

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fact, in August 1791, during the debate on the final revision of this article, an earlier version submitted to the Assembly attributed to sovereignty only the quality of indivisibility. Robespierre demanded that inalienability be added.[14] On September 7, 1791, Siéyès declared: "France must not be an assembly of small nations, governed separately in democracy; it is by no means a collection of states; it is a unique entity, edified by integrating parties." Subsequently, on September 25, 1792, France declared itself to be "one and indivisible." Intermediate bodies and basic popular collectivities were considered to be illegitimate. A year later, this position was reiterated by the Jacobins in their denunciation of the "federalist danger." Accordingly, the revolutionaries would attempt to rid themselves of all linguistic dialects, and would demand suppression of the ancient provinces and their substitution with geometrically equal departments.[15]

"The People" Become an Abstraction

Once the concept of "the nation" was legitimated, the concept of "the people" became an abstraction. This was the price "the people" had to pay for declaring themselves to be "sovereign." As Boroumand observes: "If 'the people,' as an objective reality, cannot be admitted to the sphere of national sovereignty, which is a metaphysical entity *par excellence*, then their metamorphosis into an ideal entity allow them to participate in the logic of national sovereignty without endangering the transcendent existence of 'the nation' incarnated in representation."[16] In other words, "the people" are perceived to be a manifestation of the principle of unity and indivisibility, but without any presupposition of them being composed of

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14. The Assembly diverged from Rousseau on this point. Rousseau defined sovereignty in terms of inalienability, rather than indivisibility ("viewing sovereignty as separate is erroneous", he wrote, since he saw it from a different perspective). On the one hand, he speaks of inalienability not in terms of the sovereign power exercised in the name of "the nation," but, rather, in terms of the people, who until today retain their power through their representatives. On the other hand, he makes indivisibility a characteristic of sovereign power, which he considers to be essentially homogeneous, while the revolutionaries attributed it to the people assimilated with the nation. Boroumand notes: "Where, for Rousseau, the exercise of sovereignty is inalienable, for the Revolution, it is indivisible, which justifies its monopoly by representation. And where, for Rousseau, the extension of sovereignty is indivisible, for the Revolution, it is inalienable, which justifies an unlimited authority of sovereignty and, consequently, the amalgamation of powers." Ladan Boroumand, *La guerre des principes*, *op cit.*, p. 171.

15. See R. Debbasch, *Le principe révolutionnaire d'unité et d'indivisibilité de la république* (Paris: Economica, 1988); and Lucien Jaume, *Le discours jacobin et la démocratie* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

16. Ladan Boroumand, *La guerre des principes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

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particular communities and distinct entities. The idea of a nation as a unitary and transcendent entity, whose unity and indivisibility are necessarily independent of any external principle, ended by reestablishing the notion of a people *jusqu'à s'y substituer* [who have substituted themselves], which has remained a tradition in French common law until today. Finally, the revolutionary concept of sovereignty made nationality and citizenship synonymous: no longer was there any national who was not a citizen (except for the deprivation of civil rights), or any citizen who was not a national. Being so "indivisible" and unitary, "the people" had become an abstraction. That is why, even today, France is not a federal state and cannot recognize the existence of a Breton or a Corsican people.

Thus, the same concept of sovereignty, understood as the "absolute and eternal power" of a republic and the source of all the rights and duties of the citizenry, obtained both during the *ancien régime* and the Revolution. Jacobinist sovereignty is no more restricted than Bodin's sovereignty. The revolutionaries denounced "federalism" on the same grounds as the absolute monarchy, when, for instance, the monarchy reproached the Protestants for seeking to "cantonize" France after the Swiss model. They demonized and fought against the local particularities in the same manner in which royal power tried to limit the autonomy of the feudal lords by any means possible. In order to legitimate revolutionary justice, they employed the same arguments that Richelieu used to defend the discretionary power of the prince. The Revolution opposed national sovereignty to royal absolutism, not by challenging absolutism, but by transferring the absolute prerogatives of the king to the nation.

As Mona Ozouf writes: "Certainly, the people of the Revolution appear to have separated themselves from the Old World by inventing a society of free and equal individuals. But, in reality, they inherited from absolutism an idea much more ancient and more constraining: the idea of national sovereignty, i.e., a mythic, transcendent order of individuals. And this idea quickly discovered its efficacy when national sovereignty took the vacant place of the absolute sovereignty of the king. . . . The Terror, far from being the expedient of the created despair of a republic in distress, is inscribed in the logic of this element of the *ancien régime*."[17] In fact, even if evidence suggests that the Terror violated the natural rights of individuals, it by no means violated the rights of the nation, which it claimed to guarantee and to preserve. As Boroumand also writes: "The similarities

17. Preface to *ibid.*, p. 10.

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between absolutism and Jacobinism are explicable. If the political reflexes and methods were the same before and after 1789, this means that they were moved by the same principle: the sovereignty of the nation.[18] Thus, as Henri Mendras has observed, "what was vindication in the 16th century became in France an absolute doctrine, an intangible principle for the monarchy for two centuries, and then for the constitutions after 1791. This principle was a juridical fiction, an abstraction incarnated in the king, an absolute principle; the king disappeared, the Republic resumed.[19]

Liberal political thought also came back at that point in history, when it recognized the contradictory association in the revolutionary constitutional canon between the affirmation of the universality of human rights and the principle of the sovereignty of the nation. But, it proceeded in the inverse direction of the one prevailing at that time. It sought to discover in the theory of human rights the foundations of a limitation of national sovereignty or, more precisely, the foundations of a transfer of sovereignty from the political to the legal sphere. Actually, with the exception of the followers of Hans Kelsen's legal positivism (which reestablishes public life merely as a system of norms), the liberals do not refuse to discuss the concept of sovereignty, but they tend to raise it to the level of politics, in order to attribute it to law and, often through law, to the level of "morality." In this, they could learn from Bodin, who attributed great significance to law, despite the fact that he reached completely opposite conclusions.

Liberals Invent "Ethical" and Juridical Sovereignty

In principle, such an attempt is problematic from the very beginning, since law and politics are not one and the same. Thus, the concept of sovereignty can never be expressed entirely in juridical terms. On the one hand, and contrary to what is accepted today, what is morally right is not synonymous with what is politically desirable. On the other hand, the capacity to judge without appeal is useless without the capacity to *decide* without appeal and to apply what is decided, which law by itself cannot guarantee. As Julien Freund observes: "Law has a specific sphere and so does politics, and they do not coincide, which is why conflicts between them ensue. . . . No judicial system is able to abolish the ruler's original and arbitrary political will. This reasoning is sufficient in itself to answer definitively the question of the juridical character of sovereignty. . . . The

18. *Ibid.*, p. 535.

19. Henri Mendras, "Le 'mal de Bodin'. A la recherche d'une souveraineté perdue," in *Le Débat* (May-August, 1999), p. 72.

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juridical reason stems from procedure, not from power, i.e., the 'sovereignty of the law' exists to legitimate power, not to constitute it."[20]

The liberal theory of the limitation of sovereignty by law — in effect, the sovereignty of law — usually is linked with the desire for a purely legal and rational administration of human affairs. Politics, which is considered to be inevitably dependent upon irrational and arbitrary "decisions," is disqualified, since the political sphere denies the autonomy and, thus, the essence of law. The attempt to suppress sovereignty first with legislative power, then with law itself, turns out to be a "depolitization" of public life. Accordingly, the titular wielder of power is no more than an executor; in the worst case, merely a figurehead. The democratic sphere of the people's will can be ignored, since it contradicts the juridical and moral norms that are considered to be superior. In the field of international relations, the result was that it became impossible to recognize political equality among different national sovereignties, and to resolve international disputes collectively. This contradiction led, in turn, to the "right of intervention," which also pretends to limit political sovereignty by a legal norm and, ultimately, by "moral" values. For example, Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Zaki Laïdi have declared that "ethical sovereignty is a new way to think about sovereignty," and they have defined this new form as "the refusal to allow anyone to claim sovereignty for objectives contrary to basic freedoms and human rights."[21] Such a type of discourse, which is regularly used to justify "humanitarian wars," i.e., military aggression pretending to be "just," immediately poses the question of who, besides sovereign states, should concretely limit political sovereignty. By definition, only those who have the means to do so can exercise the "right of intervention." But, then, law becomes subordinated to power, which contradicts the theory. Far from disappearing, political sovereignty becomes a privilege of those strong enough to enforce the law.

Carl Schmitt is one of the strong critics of the liberal concept of sovereignty, in which the state is subordinated to law, and decision is reached exclusively through discussion, while public life is strictly separated from a largely depoliticized "private sphere." Schmitt demonstrates that this concept is fundamentally anti-democratic, first, because it tends to discourage wider participation in public life, and second, because it rejects democratic choices which might oppose current juridical and constitutional norms. Schmitt also asserts that legal sovereignty, based on a collection of

20. Julien Freund, *L'essence du politique*, *op. cit.*, *pp. 119-120.*
21. Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Zaki Laïdi, in *Libération* (June 6, 1999).

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norms and procedures, is, by definition, unable to indicate who should decide in a state of exception. Sovereignty then reverts to the problem of identifying the instance (or person) with the capacity to impose its will in a concrete situation — independently, even from law. Since the state of exception most precisely reveals this instance, Schmitt concludes: "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception."[22] This is a matter of who decides whether a state of exception *exists,* and who decides *in* this situation. As Freund concludes: "When the exception is not covered by rules or norms, an instance other than law is needed to decide what should be done. Those situations will always be present, especially because they are unpredictable."[23] From a Schmittian viewpoint, it could be said that there is never an interruption or vacancy of sovereignty. When an instance ceases to be sovereign, another immediately takes its place. It is not necessarily a state instance, but always a higher one. This explains why the real sovereign is not always recognized or called "sovereign." Hegemony, exercised in a context of power and with effects often exterior to law, is also a form of sovereignty. Thus, sovereignty always exists in the real world. Abandoning the concept will not erase the reality, but only occlude it.[24]

Johannes Althusius: Divided Sovereignty

Bodin's concept of sovereignty successively inspired absolute monarchy, revolutionary Jacobinism, state nationalism, republican ideology, fascism and totalitarian regimes. This explains why today this view of sovereignty can be found within totally opposite political groups: "nationalistic" republicans and xenophobic nationalists, revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries, and among both leftists and rightists.[25] All these groups

22. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, *op cit.*, p. 5 (translation altered).

23. Julien Freund, *L'essence du politique*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

24. Cf. Paul Hirst, "Carl Schmitt's Decisionism," in Chantal Mouffe, ed., *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 7-17.

25. For example, Joseph de Maistre, who was influenced by Bodin, wrote that: "any sort of sovereignty is absolute by nature," i.e., in a way, it always is despotic, since nothing can be superior to the sovereign, and sovereignty cannot be limited without being destroyed. See *De la souveraineté du peuple. Un anti-contrat social* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992, p. 179). Maistre understood, contrary to many of his disciples, that the French Revolution is explained, above all, by the evolution of the monarchy toward absolutism, an evolution which makes the power unbearable while implying the simultaneous undermining of the nobility and the third estate, whose respective functions were indispensable for the smooth functioning of society. This idea would be further explored by Tocqueville. Maistre accurately notes that "sovereignty is based on human consent, since, if a certain people decides to disobey, then sovereignty would disappear; it would be impossible to imagine the establishment of sovereignty without imagining a people agreeing to obey" (*Ibid.*, p. 92).

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have in common an attachment to the notion of sovereignty and, above all, to the belief that sovereignty cannot be conceived of other than in Bodin's sense. However, the idea of sovereignty expressed by Johannes Althusius in his major work, *Politica methodice digesta* (1603), is completely different.

An adversary of Bodin, Althusius (1557-1638) bases his argument on Aristotle when describing man as a social animal naturally inclined to mutual solidarity and reciprocity — what he calls communication of goods, services, and rights. For Althusius, political science is a methodical description of the conditions of social life; he uses the word "symbiosis" to describe how it functions. Denouncing the idea of a self-sufficient individual, he argues that society is first, a relation among its members (or "symbiots"), and second, based on a series of political and social pacts concluded successively from the bottom up by a multitude of autonomous, natural, and institutional associations (or "consociations"), both public and private: families and households, guilds and corporations, civil communities and secular bodies, towns and provinces, etc. These "consociations" coalesce in an order from the most simple to the most complex. On each level, individuals interact, not as isolated units, but as members of an already existing community, which never abandons the totality of its rights in favor of a larger society. In this context, Althusius examines the notion of representation in a sense completely different from that of liberal thought: for Althusius, the social contract is not a unique act resulting from free individual wills, but, rather, an integrating alliance (*foedus*) — a continuing process of "symbiotic" communication of individuals defined, above all, by their mutual belonging.

The People Delegate, but They do not Forfeit Sovereignty

Global society, which Althusius calls the "integral symbiotic community," is defined as an organization ascending from a plurality of communities founded on prior associations and multiple memberships, and disposing of overlapping powers. The political body is the result of this process of uniting communities, where each successive level draws its legitimacy and its capacity to act from the autonomy of the lower levels.[26] The goal of public action is to specify the levels of mutual solidarity and the autonomy of the collective participants, whose consent is actualized

26. Cf. Alain de Benoist, "Johannes Althusius, 1557-1638," in *Krisis* (March 1999), pp. 2-34. Cf. also Chantal Delsol, *L'État subsidiaire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992); and "Souveraineté et subsidiarité, ou l'Europe contre Bodin," in *La Revue Tocqueville* (1998), p. 2.

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and organized in an open dialectic of the general and the particular, the basic idea being "what concerns all must be approved by all" (*"quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus approbetur"*). In this regard, one could speak of "an ascending system of "consecutive federalization"[27] or a "consociative democracy" (Arendt Lijphart).

For Althusius, sovereignty or "majesty" belongs to the people in perpetuity. It cannot be prescribed, because it resides inalienably in the popular community, and because "there is no absolute personal power in a community." The people can delegate it, but cannot forfeit it. "The right of majesty," writes Althusius, "cannot be ceded, abandoned, or alienated by its proprietors. . . . This right has been established by those who participate in this kingdom collectively, and by each of them individually. They are the ones who create it; without them, it could neither be established nor maintained. I have given politics the right of majesty, but I have attributed it to the kingdom, i.e., to the republic or the people," says Althusius, adding that he "does not care about Bodin's clamour."

Far from being separated from the people, sovereignty emanates from them. The prince derives his function only from the inalienable right of the people to govern themselves. There is no other authority than that invested in the people — no authority in the form of the transfer of power from the people to the prince, but, rather, in the form of a delegation of power that the people never cease to possess intrinsically and substantially. In other words, the prince exercises his power under the control of the people, and he must use it for the common good, which remains his main goal.[28] Thus, the prince does not govern society as if he were alienated from it or independent of it. He is not the proprietor, but the trustee of sovereignty: he possesses only the right of this sovereignty. This same idea can be found in Rousseau, but with a crucial difference: Rousseau admits *only* that, in terms of his theory of the general will, a fundamentally unitary and homogeneous society is based on the absolute denial of any "partial society,"[29] while Althusius' system is based on the participation and representation of all particular identities.

Therefore, sovereignty is not absolute; on the contrary, it can be distributed and shared. Inspired both by the imperial model, ancient Ger-

27. Thomas O. Hueglin, "Le fédéralisme d'Althusius dans un monde post-westphalien in *L'Europe en formation* (Spring 1999), p. 33; and *Community - Federalism - Subsidiarity* (Waterloo: Wilfrid University Press, 1999).

28. As Thomas Aquinas writes: "Something done for the common good goes to the people or to someone who represents the people" (*"alicujus gerentis totius multidunis"*).

29. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, II, 3.

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manic communal "freedoms," and the functioning of the common and cooperative associations of the old Hanseatic towns,[30] Althusius concludes that, on each level of society, two series of organs are needed: one, representing the lower communities, which are established to retain the power that they may exercise concretely; the other, representing the upper level, whose attributions always are limited by the first. Each lower level designates its rulers, who are also its representatives *vis-à-vis* the upper level, and the delegation of this power can be withdrawn at any time. Given the conditional nature of this delegation, the power of the upper level is always dependent upon the consent of the lower levels. The state is superior to each of the levels beneath it, but not to the unity of them all. The prince, as already seen, exercises sovereign power through delegation based on a reciprocal pact, in which he is considered to be the representative of the people, while the people retain the power to delegate. The power of the prince is supreme, since he has the greatest authority, but this authority also is limited by the autonomy of the "consociations," which prevent him from infringing upon their own particular powers. The principle of sovereignty is preserved, but is subordinated to mutual consent.

The Interlacing of Levels of Power

For Althusius, sovereignty is not synonymous with omnicompetent authority. It only represents the level of power with the greatest capacity to decide and to execute a given task. The sovereign cannot act willfully without being held accountable. He has more extensive power, but he can use it only for what it was granted. On each level, there is an "exchange of sovereignty," i.e., a differentiation of instances, and a sharing of jurisdictions, which are arranged from the lowest to the highest. While Bodin's sovereignty is at once a pyramid and a circumference, with a surface oriented toward the center, Althusius' sovereignty is structured like a labyrinth and is based on the essential principle that "the vassal of my vassal is not my vassal," i.e., it implies plurality, autonomy, and the interlacing of levels of power and authority.

Bodin's model has prevailed since the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), and it is precisely on this model that the nation-state, the most common political form of modernity, was constructed. One of the consequences of this evolution has been that those who wanted to reject this model, judging

30. Cf. Otto von Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, 4 Vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1898-1913); Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28; Andrew Vincent, *Theories of the State* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 34.

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it to be implicitly totalitarian, but not having any other concept, often have been prone to reject any notion of sovereignty.

This is the case with Jacques Maritain, for whom sovereignty cannot be conceived other than as a phenomenon that transcends the body politic absolutely, and that exercises its power independently of it, which is why he rejects it. Maritain writes: "Sovereignty is incompatible with democracy." Inapplicable with respect to the people and to the state, it implies that power is superimposed on the body politic and that it "absorbs" those who are governed. Thus, he concludes that: "The concepts of sovereignty and absolutism were forged together on the same anvil. They need to be banished together.[31]

Advocates of sovereignty today commit the same error as Maritain. They assume that a sovereignty that is shared, distributed, or limited, a sovereignty that is not allowed to develop into an unlimited, unconditional, and absolute power, does not merit the name, and they come to precisely the opposite conclusion. They say that they favor sovereignty, but one based on the same definition.

Federalism and Subsidiarity

As Chantal Delsol has observed, in reality " today Bodin's sovereignty is only surface deep. In fact, it has neither a concrete existence nor a traceable legitimacy."[32] The idea of the nation-state, which reigned in Europe from the Peace of Westphalia until the first half of the 20th century, is today reaching its end; two world wars have revealed its limits. The erosion from both the top and the bottom of the nation-state signifies the end of modernity; in political terms, the end of the Westphalian Age.[33] Referring in conclusion to what has been called "Bodin's evil"[34] should not be understood

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31. Jacques Maritain, *L'homme et l'Etat* in *Oeuvres Complètes*, Vol. 9 (Paris: Universitaires, Fribourg, et Saint Paul, 1982), p. 539.

32. Delsol, *L'État subsidiaire, op.cit.*, p. 53.

33. Cf. Gene Lyons and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *Beyond Westphalia?* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995). The Westphalian model is criticized equally by Daniel Deudney, who opposes to it the "Philadelphian model," with which James Madison's name is associated and which was dominant in the US during the period between the creation of the Union and the beginning of the War of Secession. In the latter model, all collective players are "constituting members of the sovereign." See Daniel Deudney, "Binding Sovereigns. Authorities and Structures and Geopolitics in Philadelphian Systems," in Thomas Bierksteker and Cynthia Weber, eds., *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

34. Mendras, " Le 'mal de Bodin'," *op. cit.*, pp. 71-89.

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as an intention to renounce sovereignty, but, rather, to redefine it from a different prospective, one inspired by Althusius.

In the past, the Althusian type of sovereignty already inspired certain imperial or multinational constructs. Its traces can be found in Austro-Marxist theoreticians like Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, and supporters of a "federative state of nationalities," in which sovereignty is distributed between different levels of political life.[35] But, today, federalism is particularly receptive to a notion of sovereignty closely associated with the principles of autonomy and subsidiarity. In the 1930s, Maritain favored a federal Europe and called for substituting the "statolatry that reigns today" with recognition by states of "a relative autonomy, stronger than the one existing nowadays, to the smaller communities, existing inside the nation-states."[36]

A true key to Althusius' system, the principle of subsidiarity, requires that decisions be made on the lowest possible level by those who sustain the consequences of them most directly. It implies that the smallest political units retain substantial autonomous jurisdictions, and that they be represented collectively on higher levels of power. Decentralization is not the issue. In decentralization, local power is given only the authority that the central power wants to grant it; this authority is only a delegation of this central power, which remains the substantial nucleus of politics in a strictly pyramidal structure of society. For subsidiarity, the reverse is true: local levels do not delegate power to higher levels; rather, they delegate responsibilities and tasks that they cannot perform themselves; they do not cede jurisictions that they cannot assume, since they resolve in their own way all the problems they can, and they sustain the consequences of their own decisions and choices. Thus, subsidiarity represents a sharing of sovereignty: each level of authority assumes the tasks that it can. One of the consequences is that each community must be able to decide independently what goods and services it wants to have, rather than having a standardized offer of goods and services imposed on it.

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35. Cf. Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode (ed.), *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); Karl Renner, *La nation, mythe et réalité* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1998).

36. "Europe and the Federal Idea," in *The Commonweal*, April 19 and 26, 1940; extended version in Jacques Maritain, *L'Europe et l'idee federale* (Paris: Mame, 1993), pp. 15-47. The incompatibility of federalism and Bodin's concept of sovereignty often has been emphasized, notably by Harold Laski (*Studies in the Problem of Sovereignty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917); *The State in Theory and Practice* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1935), and also by Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

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Europe: A Community of Communities

Subsidiarity is opposed to Bodin's concept of sovereignty, which is based not on the criterion of sufficiency, but on that of superior capacity: the central state must have the authority for itself, since, in principle, it is presumed to be superior. Bodin's concept of sovereignty is more compatible with a dictatorial, than with a democratic regime. However, even in the latter case, the only opportunity it offers its citizens is to choose their representatives. By contrast, the federalist principle of subsidiarity is incompatible with any form of dictatorship, and is more democratic, because it recognizes not only the capacity of individuals and groups to choose their representatives, but also their capacity to participate in public life and to decide by themselves and for themselves. As Delsol has noted: "French society nowadays is democratic, but it is not subsidiary, because it leaves too little space for independence of action by groups, and prefers to confide in the central state to understand what already has been decided democratically."[37] The principle of subsidiarity implies autonomy and responsibility, while Bodin's concept of sovereignty, founded on a principle opposed to organized groups, consecrates heteronomy, irresponsibility, and generalized welfare.

More than half a century ago, Michel Glady wrote: "In order to take the road toward real federalism, it is necessary to abandon the nation-state as the foundation of society, i.e., to put an end to imperialism and statolatry. . . . Only the communal formula proves to be pliable, to be humane, and to make it possible to avoid various stumbling blocks."[38] From the standpoint of subsidiarity, the real political and social unity, which is superior even to the region, is in fact the commune. Mendras reaches the same conclusion: "The French demonstrate an indefensible attachment to direct democracy: the mayor is a popular public figure, as all politicians are popular who maintain contact with their local constitutuencies. Thus, it is from the commune that a theory of political legitimacy could be reconstructed in a ascending — not a descending — order."[39]

In such a perspective, the existence of groups and communities with particular interests do not hinder the common good. Rather, the extension of democratic procedures hinders those factions which act to the detriment of the common interest. Thus, the nation is defined as a

37. Michel Glady, "A hauteur d'homme. Des frontieres au fédéralisme, in *L'Ordre nouveau* (November 1934), p. 10.

38. Mendras, "Le 'mal de Bodin'," *op cit.*, p. 86.

39. Delsol, "Souveraineté et subsidiarité, ou l'Europe contre Bodin," *op cit.*, p. 50.

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community of communities, which not only can participate in a larger community of a supra-national type, but whose particular communities can choose to have closer contact with other communities. While the Jacobinist viewpoint makes sovereignty the guarantee of national unity, the principle of subsidiarity makes the preservation of pluralism the guarantee of sovereignty. A well-conceived Europe, i.e., a federal Europe, would not be the agent of the dissolution of existing sovereignties, but, rather, the instrument of their rebirth as a means of European sovereignty conceived and practiced differently.

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« Pensée unique » et pensées critiques

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Notes:

God or Nature? A Western Dilemma: Reply to Simon Oliver

Manussos Marangudakis

Simon Oliver argues that the modern culture-nature divide is bound to collapse, because of the relentless expansion of technology into culture and nature.[1] This breakdown could lead to a new appreciation of both, but only if the divide is replaced by a truly transcendental theology. Otherwise, culture and nature will continue to be seen as subjects and objects. Oliver raises issues crucial to the understanding of predominant cognitive categories: the durability of the culture-nature divide; its theological foundations and the prospect of changing them by means of an alternative theology; and the role of objective (e.g., technological diffusion) and subjective (e.g., ethics and politics) factors in constructing cognitive divisions. Oliver's central argument is valid, i.e., that the physical environment cannot be recovered if non-utilitarian purpose is acknowledged. Yet, his analysis suffers from three main shortcomings.

The first shortcoming is that Oliver assumes technology and nature to be distinct. Within the context of materialism, this distinction is groundless. Instead, materialism recognizes technology to be qualitatively similar to the physical environment and to be part of the same natural universe. Indeed, their affinity could be described by Oliver's "mimetism," which implicitly acknowledges that technology and the physical environment obey the same natural laws. Given today's tendency to "de-center" the human subject, culture increasingly is recognized to be ontologically similar to technology and the physical environment. In a naturalist ontology, the transcendental domain is that of abstract natural laws, while the immanent domain either comprises these laws in action or their application to further human goals. The latter, the immanent laws in action, are valued as serving human "needs," which are always grounded in some natural pre-disposition or teleological fulfilment. Following Latour and Harraway, Oliver claims

1. Simon Oliver, "Theology as Pseudo-Ecology? Reply to Manussos Marangudakis," in *Telos* 115 (Spring 1999), pp. 95-108.

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that culture and nature are ceasing to be distinct categories.[2] Yet, the phenomenon to which Oliver refers is not the ontological similarity between culture and nature, but the distinction between culture and wilderness. Even if, in the future, technological expansion overruns wilderness (a doubtful hypothesis, as "protected wild areas" and new "organic" products suggest), nature will still be intact, since the validity of "nature" does not depend on space uncontaminated by culture (wilderness), but on nature's ability to provide truth. As long as nature is regarded as the source of "what really is," it will remain the ontological point of reference, notwithstanding any epistemological problems posed by identifying nature with the cognitive means to decipher it.

The second shortcoming is that Oliver's argument for a return to a Thomist theology has two methodological flaws. The first involves the ontological use of teleology. He claims that orthodox theology allows for a *telos*, but modernism rejected teleology as part of theology's unverifiable baggage. Regardless of whether one accepts or rejects such a *telos*, Oliver develops a circular argument: theology allows for a *telos*; *telos* can be revealed only by rejecting causal explanations and returning to theology; theology allows access to *telos*. In other words, a theological assumption is used to justify theology. The second methodological flaw has to do with the functional role Oliver assigns to teleology. He argues that Thomist theology and the return of a non-bracketed God allows for a reintegration of culture and nature, which, in turn, counteracts the modernist dichotomy and the consequent mistreatment of nature. Yet, Oliver does not clarify what this means. Does it mean that God exists? Does it mean that God should exist, if the world is to be saved? Or does it mean that, when God existed, nature was protected and revered? Oliver encourages a sense of guilt, at best, and of despair, at worst, but he does not provide a solution. Is it possible to bring God back simply as the necessary component of a philosophical equation?

The third shortcoming is that, even if it were possible to recover a non-bracketed God, this would not be possible using pre-Scotist, Thomist theology. Duns Scotus initiated a "maneuver," not a radical alteration of the general understanding of God or nature. He only delivered a logically necessary *coup de grace* to a God who already was too distant to be meaningful. To discover such a non-bracketed God, one would have to move further back in history and to an alternative theology.

God and Nature

There is a long standing pattern in Western culture that whenever God or the divine becomes meaningless to human affairs, nature replaces God as both the transcendental and the immanent reference points. Contrary to modern ecological

2. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, tr. by Catherine Porter (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), and Donna Harraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Press, 1991).

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wisdom, the pattern of the relation between God and nature in the West indicates that it was not God's presence that turned nature into a meaningless domain, but, rather, God's absence. In such a context, the binary opposition between the sacred and the profane becomes culture and wilderness. This, however, is an unstable dichotomy that leads to relativism and amoralism, inviting, once again, the reinvention of God.

A comprehensive, though indirect response to Oliver, as well as to Latour and Harraway, requires an analysis of this pattern. The unfolding of this pattern shows that the demise of the divine and its subsequent replacement by nature became a central feature of Western practice twice before the advent of modernity: first, in ancient Greece (750-500 BC); and then, in medieval Europe. In both cases, the divine was replaced by rational nature; in both cases, a social milieu not only permitted, but encouraged debate. It was the interaction between text and social practice that finally gave rise to naturalist ontologies.

It is anachronistic to attribute to "nature" any significance before pre-Socratic philosophy and Christianity. Yet, it would be equally wrong to believe that its absence implies the absence of cosmological dichotomies. Instead, different ideas of the supernatural — the "numinous" — assume different divides. A fundamental divide, common to all cultures, is the distinction between the familiar and the alien. This distinction is between the recognizable human, domesticated world and what lies beyond it. Definitions of the human and non-human worlds are malleable, subjective and, in the final analysis, social constructs, i.e., the divide does not depend on any objective consideration of what is "out there." The latter is a matter of definition, cultural impressions, or even desires. Instead, the consistency of the culture-wilderness divide is due to the critical role it plays in the construction of social identity. Either as individuals or in groups, people need to give meaning to their situation and purpose to their action, especially in times of rapid social change. Identity necessitates reference to the non-human domain, since the latter is a central feature of the cosmic order, informing symbolic communication as well as constituting a meaningful world. As Lévi-Strauss and Mary Douglas have suggested, social order is impossible without the presence of both.[3]

Yet, contrary to structuralism, the divide not only evolves in time, but can cease to be a subconscious component of culture and become a visible and dynamic social factor. This can be observed as we pass from ante- to post-Axial thinking.[4] The references different cultures used to describe the divide before the advent of the Axial Age (6th-4th century BC) were versions of a similar, vernacular, first-order thinking. The ways they described the natural environment were

3. Claud Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked* (London: Cape, 1970); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Paul Keagan, 1966).

4. Yehuda Elkana, "The Emergence of Second-Order Thinking in Classical Greece," in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*, ed. by Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), pp. 40-64.

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passive reflections of actual social conditions. Though all cultures perceived the divide to be meaningful, especially in symbolically distinguishing between a world of familiarity and an alien or exotic world, the components of the divide remained ontologically similar. Culture and wilderness were equally real and fully compatible. Wilderness embraced foreign lands, alien peoples, and hostile demons, while the cultural world embraced the homeland, its people, cultivated soil, and domestic gods.

Axial thinking radically altered this situation by reorganizing cognitive categories and by introducing original, culture-specific distinctions between the immanent and the transcendental domains. This was true of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zen philosophy, Confucianism, Greek philosophy, and Judaism. As for the divide between culture and wilderness, it was accommodated in the new framework by becoming part of both the immanent and the transcendental domains. Yet, this accommodation was never fully satisfactory. Since Axial thinking did not consider the familiar and the alien to be valid categories, as long as God was alive, culture and wilderness remained a secondary divide.

Social Change and Ionian Naturalism

In Greece, the Axial Age arrived during the 6th century, when the Olympian world of gods and demons gave way to a naturalist, Ionian cosmology, within which immanent nature became an active, dynamic component of social action against pagan gods and aristocratic political power. This development was related to the way politics, ideology, economics, and warfare were accommodated in the Greek *polis*. Three social conditions were particularly crucial in affecting Axial thinking. First, administrators and priests were not dependent on the political ruling class; thus, they could question the deeds of the strong and oppose the "is" to the "ought." Second, cognitive tools, such as scripture, audience, and debate were well developed and available to the many, rather than the few. Third, the *polis'* military might no longer depended on a few horse-mounted aristocrats, but on the heavy-armored phalanx of most of the male population. In short, commoners attained self-reflection as they gained power at the expense of the aristocracy.

The new social conditions "employed" the cosmic category of nature to make sense of the new situation and to support democratic political demands. This was particularly true in Asia Minor, where egalitarianism in the Ionian colonies was shaped by an emphasis on the world's natural principles. The world was said to be neither made nor ruled by some supernatural entities, who maintain intimate relations with some gifted human beings, i.e., the aristocracy, but, rather, it was made of natural elements. There was nothing beyond these forces, and every aspect of the world followed their laws: balance, equality, and retribution. Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, all from Miletus, made nature an object of rational investigation and offered a comprehensive account of the universe. Everything in this world shared the same quality and the same vital force. The meaning of life

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was not something mysterious, accessible only to the few, but something open to anyone. The world was compatible with, and accessible to human intelligence. The message of the Milesians was: one nature; one temporality.

Suddenly, the universe was susceptible to discussions using logical propositions and deductive logic. Immediately, nature became the focus of attention, a matter of public debate open to dia-logue (literary inter-speech) or anti-logue (literary counter-speech), in a fashion similar to the way laws were interpreted and public issues were debated in the agora. Absence of cosmic agents allowed Ionian philosophers to break free from the political vocabulary of hierarchy and traditional rituals. For those believing in aristocratic principles, the nature of things was unequal. Being external to them, cosmic law had to be applied to this inequality to bring equilibrium and balanced reciprocity. For the Milesians, the nature of things was qualitatively identical, since all were derived from the same substance and were quantitatively equal, because they were actually or potentially symmetrical. Most of all, natural beings obeyed the necessity of their nature. In other words, with Ionian materialism, nature and law became identical and their relation tautological. Human society should comply with this law.

Despite its immense influence, unquestioning trust in the senses proved to be Ionian materialism's Achilles heel. How could the changeable and the unpredictable features of the senses be trusted? Greek philosophers struggled with this increasingly problematic equation. Heraclitus denied substance and affirmed the existence of process, the constant flux of existence. Following this reasoning to its logical conclusion, Parmenides argued that, if there is only one universal substance, there can be no real change, and, since the senses suggested that change occurs, they could not be trusted. For the next hundred years, Greeks battled with Parmenides' ghost as they tried to accommodate both the immovable quality of the transcendental domain and the changing, immanent domain of nature in a rational cosmic scheme. As the immanent domain appeared uncertain, it gradually lost its ontological validity.

The social and intellectual struggle for democracy was faltering, because of its own shortcomings. Yet, the downfall of Ionian materialism also guaranteed its everlasting influence. Regardless of the final outcome, the debate about the internal contradictions of materialism already had been decided in favor of a divide between immanent matter and transcendental truth. Those debating about the essence of change and the reliability of the senses already had accepted the rules of Ionian epistemology. Underlying the debate was the understanding that any valid argument should be logically coherent, taking into account the physical world and not relying solely on tradition, myth, or revelation. The divine also was redefined. Under Ionian scrutiny, philosophers could not accept superhuman agents any longer, but only non-anthropomorphic and rational principles. Even more important, the debate as a whole came to accept the substantive similarity of culture and wilderness, humanity and the physical environment.

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This debate about the qualities of the universe was more than a matter of intellectual clarity. It also was affected by social factors shaping that environment: the *polis'* public sphere. Here, Ionian materialism came face to face with other influential worldviews, such as Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and Olympian cosmology. During the 6th and 5th centuries, all of the four main worldviews found specialized niches in the *polis*. Soteriological and other-worldly Orphism found expression in secret rituals and mysteries, such as the Eleusinian mysteries. Ionian materialism inhabited the *agora*, private schools, and *symposia*. Pythagoreanism found expression in architecture, dietary rules, and military tactics. Lastly, the pagan Olympian pantheon was maintained and elaborated through public ceremonies, initiation rituals, and monumental constructions offering employment to poor Athenian citizens and international prestige to Athenian foreign policy. Thus, Greek social action spun around four worldviews: intermingling, cross-fertilizing, and cross-refuting each other in the life of the *polis*. The *agora* became the institutional means of their blending, and drama became the institutional means of their cultural amalgamation. The nature of society, the gods, and human beings were conjured up in the speeches of Pericles, as well as in the passions, dilemmas, and choices of tragic figures, such as Oedipus, Media, Prometheus, Iocaste, and Pentheas.[5]

This blending suggests that, once a cosmology ceases to be the exclusive prerogative of intellectuals, it becomes subject to cultural scrutiny. It fuses with loaded interpretations, political demands, and social movements. To follow the story of Greek Axial thinking at the end of the 4th century BC, there was neither a singular idea of the natural world nor of the nature of things. The written word had cultivated reflection, abstraction, and the objectification of concepts. When this was applied to a complex, partially literate, multi-faceted and mobile society, a kaleidoscope of cosmologies emerged. The boundaries of mystical Orphism, sober naturalism, esoteric Pythagoreanism, and venerated Olympianism were blurred, cross-fertilizing and informing each other. Partially overlapping social groups were instrumental to this diffusion. If he had not committed a crime, an Athenian (male) citizen was involved in Olympian festivals and could be an Orphic follower; if wealthy enough, even the student of a Sophist. Overlapping roles brought overlapping identities, allowing social actors cognitive flexibility in their daily affairs.

The blending of different worldviews affected the development of philosophy as well, since intellectuals also came under the influence of the overlapping social roles and political vagaries of the time. They were citizens performing public rituals, taking part in ceremonies, and venerating their heritage. Plato's disappointment with a democracy that had executed his master and had lost the war against Sparta was typical of such personal experience. Thus, cultural

5. Sarah C. Hamphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1983).

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affinity, personal tastes, and the logic of the debate itself all contributed to the eclectic blending of all four worldviews under the epistemological principles of naturalism. Of course, it would be wrong to argue that there were no animists at that time, who believed in an animistic world, with gods giving birth to life, and that trees, rocks, and rivers were alive. The idea of wilderness remained alive as the domain of Centauroi, Pan, and Bacchus. Yet, wilderness had lost its social niche, since it was brought into the *polis* and institutionalized under state-controlled festivals. The Bacchic divide had been by-passed, organizationally as well as intellectually, by philosophical schools and mystical, urban religions.

Plato and Aristotle consolidated debates about truth and reality in what became the two "Western ways." Closely affiliated with Pythagoreanism, Platonism gave prominence to the transcendental domain of ideas and relegated the immanent domain to a cave of shadow-boxing. Humans and the physical world were entrapped in the cave, yet humanity could have transcendental experiences owing to rational and meditating capacities. Closer to Ionian and atomistic worldviews, Aristotelian cosmology gave prominence to the immanent domain and accepted the reality of the empirical world. Matter strove to become perfect by realizing its form, not by contemplating eternal ideas. For Aristotle, the universe was guided, not by a blissful, good, and beautiful idea, but by a morally indifferent, yet logically necessary unmoved mover. Yet, while Plato and Aristotle were antithetical in their ontological categories, they were in agreement about the worth of humanity. The intellect dissociates man from other animals in that the rational mind is able to grasp the true meaning of the world: either its geometric beauty or its biological *telos*. In any case, human reason is not confined to experience, but is eternally active, divine, and immortal.

Logically, the philosophers' God was omnipotent, but socially irrelevant. Plato's divine was moral, indeed, good itself, yet only a few worthy philosophers could approach it. It is no accident, then, that, until Christianity, Plato's "numinous" remained a strictly intellectual, almost esoteric activity, while Aristotle's unmoved mover was utterly insignificant in human affairs. It could not be addressed, since it neither asked for nor gave away anything; its purpose was to make nature intelligible and, in a sense, to solve the atomist problem. While the Platonist and Aristotelian gods were logically present and socially absent, the Platonist and Aristotelian universes were rational entities compatible with human reason. The technological and economic advances at the time were direct consequences of Plato's geometry and Aristotle's biology. By calling the natural domain a realm of shadows, Plato invited human intervention. For Aristotle, nature was the means to discover truth in both the transcendental and the immanent domains. In its transcendental form, nature was constituted by the forms. Yet, the forms were not to be worshipped or deified, but to be used as explanatory principles. As the immanent truth, nature was a world that could be manipulated with no moral implications.

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The Augustinian Impact on Western Ecotheology

When Christianity arrived in Europe, it encountered an established structure of philosophical categories. First, the cosmos was constituted of the transcendental domain of ideas or the unmoved mover, and of the immanent domain of the empirical world, i.e., humans cum physical environment. Second, both the immanent and the transcendental domains could be grasped by human intellect, reason, and contemplation. The Pauline message, that God became man to save man from sin, was strange, but not incompatible with the philosophy of the day. Instead, pre-existing categories were available to accommodate the one God, the fallen world, and the special status of humanity. Yet, the new religion suggested that compassion is the means to achieve salvation. It did not specify if compassion and humility were to be applied to the whole of the immanent, fallen domain, or just to fellow human beings. While there was no theological doubt that nature and humanity were ontologically different, since humans have free will, while nature does not, the exact properties of these two domains were unclear. What is the relation between a gift (i.e., nature), its maker and donor (i.e., God), and the receiver (i.e., humanity)? What is the purpose of nature to humanity's striving for salvation? In the West, the answer was delivered single-handedly by St. Augustine. He, alone, channelled the Western perception of God, humanity, and nature to what Richard Tarnas calls the judgmental path: nature is the kingdom of evil, humanity struggles with nature to attain the afterlife.[6]

Augustine's outlook and, through him, the Western perception of culture and nature were set on the judgmental path by factors similar to those that shaped Greek philosophy: cross-fertilizing philosophical views; the social and political conditions of the day; personal life experience and cultural heritage. First, it was the collapse of classic knowledge following the Gothic invasions. The retraction of knowledge, especially of philosophy and comprehension of Greek, left most Western scholars with fragmented echoes of the past: positivist Roman Law; a few neo-Platonic texts available in Latin, and the Vulgate Bible. They resulted in a simple theology that stressed the "kataphatic" (positivistic) approach to God — to know what God's properties are. Second, it was the threat to Western Christianity of heresies that argued that Jesus was a lesser creation of the Godhead. Reacting to this threat, Augustine stressed the absolute similarity — the "simplicity" and the "indivisibility" — of the Trinity. The last contributing factor was the sacking of Rome by the vandals. Suddenly, Christians in the West realized that faith might not save them from earthy calamities. This led Western theology to devalue this world and to emphasize the importance of the afterlife. All of the above contributed to the Augustinian perception of the trinitarian God as a remote and indivisible entity, and of

6. Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (London: Pimlico, 1998), p. 138.

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humanity in exile in an inhospitable world and needing guidance by an authoritarian and disciplinary Church.[7]

Due, in part, to his tormenting conversion, that made him feel insignificant before a mighty God, Augustine saw humanity as too weak to attain any sense of the divine in the earthly world of darkness, ignorance, and decadence. Humanity is perpetually damned, frail, and uncertain, while God, perfect and confined in His "simplicity" and "indivisibility," is too far away to provide any comfort other than by His scarce and unpredictable grace. In this bleak cosmology, sin was defined as a "debt" to God for Adam and Eve's original sin, and to Jesus, who suffered on the Cross. To erase humanity's sins, it was necessary to "pay back" God by struggling against passion, lust, and pleasures.[8] Though created by God, nature as the source of temptation was now understood to be corrupted and an obstacle to salvation. Since the world is a testing ground, humanity stands alone: worldly pleasures pulling it downwards and divine love pulling it upwards. The result was a radically anthropocentric worldview, which defined nature in utilitarian terms. Its function was to satisfy basic human needs, as well as to be the means, the testing ground, of attaining the bliss of the afterlife.[9]

Most of all, having portrayed humanity as chronically flawed and alienated, driven by sin, passions, and lust, Augustinian theology could not easily incorporate a mystical communion with God in this life. God is an absolute and perfect Being, while humans are imperfect, living in natural bonds.[10] God cannot "reach out" to meet man in the moment of transcendental ecstasy. Not that God is finite; but His infinity is totally absorbed by His ontological nature in a way that no potentiality may be admitted in Him.[11] Instead, one has to look for and find God inside oneself. For Augustine, man possesses a soul which, in relation to the body, is not only superior to it, but also entirely independent of it. Humans are rational souls using bodies. This human faculty, called intelligentia, is an image of God in man. It discovers and knows all things in the eternal essences, the immutable truth which is in God. Yet, it cannot reach out either, since it is created and thus of lesser quality than the essence of God. Instead, it contains within itself and *a priori* the reflected and created copies of those immutable spiritual essences according to which everything (itself included) are made. Intelligence allows man to "taste" God within himself, rather than to discover the transcendental God. In a sense, and preceding Descartes by more than a millennium, Augustine pronounced the primacy of thought over all else humans could be, as well as its self-sufficient nature. Since the soul is a human faculty, nature remains mute, indifferent to the divine drama.

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7. For details, see *ibid.*, pp. 106-165; and Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Vintage, 1993), pp. 95-154 and 198-241.
8. Augustine, *De Utilitate Credenti.*
9. Augustine, *De Civitas Dei*, x, 10.
10. Augustine, *Summa Theologica*, i.11, p. 4.
11. Augustine, *Summa Theologica*, i. 25, pp. 1 and 3.

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Rationality, Thomism, and Scholasticism

Even though Augustine did not believe that reason could explain God, his insistence on the inability of humans to commune with God in this life, and the ability of the human intellect to grasp the divine gave scope to Western theologians to use kataphatic, positive, and rational statements to describe Him. Thus, driven by Augustinian necessity, Latin theology became increasingly preoccupied with logical statements of who God is and of how salvation could be rationally outlined and secured. In the 11th century, through the "ontological" argument, Anselm of Canterbury was keen to prove almost everything, especially the existence of God. Peter Abelard, Anselm's contemporary, developed a rational explanation of the atonement. Reason was permeating all aspects of Western theology, turning God into a rational, though powerful being. There were reactions to this trend and, for a while, in the 11th century, rationalism was checked. Bernard of Clairvaux summoned Abelard and accused him of "attempting to bring the merit of Christian faith to naught, because he supposes that by human reason he can comprehend all that is God."[12] Abelard collapsed in the hearing room and died a year later. Yet, Bernard was not offering viable alternatives to the philosophical path. As a sincere believer, he wished to keep God incomprehensible. As a true Augustinian, he also wished to keep Him unapproachable. The path on which Augustine had channelled Western theology was leading to a suffocating state of affairs. Since the path to direct communion with God was sealed, the indirect path of the senses and reason was the only alternative. It was fully exploited when the original works of Aristotle and Plato reached the West in the 12th century. Aquinas was the first to take into account Aristotelian physics, metaphysics, and logic to enrich Augustinian theology with the theory of forms. Yet, his "Aristotelian" theology situated humanity even deeper in the natural domain and thus increased the gap between humans and the divine.

Thomism and Late Medieval Social Developments

Augustine had permitted a feeble line of communication via intelligentia. Aquinas was aware of the absurdity of this argument: since God is totally transcendent (as Augustine first claimed), there could be no communication whatsoever. According to *Summa Theologica*, human beings cannot comprehend the eternal essence of God, because God is pure Being, pure actuality, while humans are corporeal entities, able to comprehend only the natural world. With no innate knowledge and unable to derive knowledge from direct intuition of the divine, humans could only know God by a process of abstraction from sensible objects. God could be approached only by faith, nature, and reason.

Aquinas rejected any significant difference between the Augustinian superior "intellect" and inferior "reason," considering both to be a single natural faculty.

12. *Epistle* 191.1

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This implied that the truths of revelation are beyond human capacity and that nature is the only domain that can be known. These assumptions, that no participation and knowledge of God is possible and that, consequently, the only possible knowledge of Him is "analogical," derived from the sensible world, had the effect of shifting attention from vision to observation, and from the inward presence to the outward present. Adelard of Bath could say: "I do not detract from God, for everything that is, is from Him and because of Him. But [nature] is not confused and without system, and human science should be given a hearing of those points which it has covered."[13] The metaphysical question "why?" gradually gave place to the physical question "how?" This, it was felt, could be answered by a correlation of the facts. All humans were capable of rational thinking, since it had been provided by God to discern nature. Using reason, everyone could recognize the principles governing life and obeyed "by nature."

Fascination with "natural laws" started to take its toll over God's freedom of action. Augustine was the first to use natural laws to argue for the obligatory character of normative principles. A form of universal natural law is the law of logic, which characterizes humans "naturally." Defending the authority of the Pope from secular philosophers, Aquinas pressed this argument to its logical conclusion: since God made nature, and gave reason to humans to comprehend nature, nature is bound to reason. The rational order that governs nature has an ontological character in that nature is the means by which God's reason manifests itself in the material world. In other words, natural necessity is not external to God, a wish of God, but a manifestation of God's essence (*in mente divina*). The conclusion came effortlessly by default: not even God could change natural laws.[14] God's domain became fully transcendental; the domain of the senses, fully immanent. Long before the Renaissance, scholastic science came to be the outcome of a universe made rational and unalterable by a rational and unalterable God.

Social Changes in the West

At that time, the West was experiencing urban regeneration and prosperity. Economic growth started becoming significant around 1100, with the emergence of an urban and profit-centered economy. Money-making gradually was recognized by the Church which, in its attempt to control the new species, made St. Francis (the son of a merchant himself) the patron saint of merchants.[15] Artisans, merchants, and laborers grew in importance. Professions increased, and the Church acknowledged their importance by enlarging their numbers and types

13. Abelard of Bath, *Quaestiones naturales*, c. 4. Quoted in Phillip Sherrard, *The Greek East and the Latin West* (Limni: Harvey and Co., 1992), p. 156.

14. Christos Giannaras, *The Real and the Imagined in Political Economy* (Athens: Domos, 1989).

15. Ovitt, George, *The Restoration of Perfection: Labor and Technology in Medieval Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

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considered to be legitimate and morally praiseworthy. While, in the 10th century, the Church was condemning commerce, as well as a wide variety of rudimentary crafts (e.g., weaving, milling, and fulling), by the end of the 13th century, it was embracing them. Labor could lead to salvation after all.

Aristotelianism was able to support such a social transformation, since it was mainly preoccupied with the ways the empirical world operates. Nature, as the domain where labor is applied, was Aristotle's point of reference. Thomism, though far from being concerned with economics, allowed science and technology to develop in a rational way. Even more important, it Christianized economic activities and growth. At the end of the 13th century, even prostitution was regarded as justifiable in that prostitutes contributed to the common good.[16] The Gothic cathedrals raised in Western Europe at that time are the epitome of medieval scientific and technological rationalism.[17] Scholasticism became the main supporter of natural sciences until the advent of modernity.[18] Reason and immanence had infiltrated religion and social practice to such an extent that no theological argument could reverse the process.

The Bracketed God

According to Oliver, Duns Scotus (1266-1308) introduced the "bracketed" God into Christian theology. Yet, Scotus only carried to its logical conclusion an argument that had been made by Aquinas and, even before him, by Augustine, i.e., that being estranged from God on earth, man is unable to directly commune with and know God. Scotus did not wish to bracket God any more than the theologians before him. Instead, he tried to combat the determinism in Thomist theology. By incorporating Aristotelianism, a naturalist philosophy, into Latin theology, Aquinas and his followers created a vision of the universe so shot through with necessary connections that almost no place remained for free will. Aquinas argued that an eternal world proceeds by necessary emanation from an immutable first cause. Free creation does not have a place in this universe, since this would entail mutability and thus contingency on the part of God as well as His effects. Scotus' account of being as common to God and to creation was intended to restore free will to prominence, and communion to a possibility that Aquinas had refuted. In this effort, as Oliver indicates, Scotism created new problems, notwithstanding the loosening of the Aristotelian web, without anything of a similar scope to replace it. On the one hand, stood the Aristotelian, physically necessary God; on the other, Scotus' transcendental and apocalyptic God.

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16. Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, tr. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

17. Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (Latrobe: The Archabbey Press, 1951).

18. John Heilborn, *The Sun in the Church* (Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

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Scotus' theology, as well as the nominalism of William of Ockham (1285-1349), exemplify the philosophical-rational questions that increasingly preoccupied Western theology. The problem was not to be found in the particular arguments theologians developed, but in the logic of the approach altogether. The prominence of reason and reasoning were the exclusive cognitive means to approach God. No one doubted the existence of God, but Western theology was led down a path increasingly obsessed with proving that God exists and that nature is His creation. The issues of why and how God is experienced, as well as the wisdom derivable from this experience, had become irrelevant This is not to say that Western theologians excluded love, devotion, and surrendering of the self as equally valid means. Yet, the gap that Augustine had opened between God and His fallen creation was immense and unreachable. Nature, though degraded after the Fall, became an increasingly important domain, not so much as a means to understand God as a means to understand the immanent domain of tangible and verifiable truths secured by an absent God.

The Eastern Alternative

The Western path was not the only possibility open to Christian theology. The Greek East developed a radically different theology, taking what Tarnas has called "the redemptive path."[19] This path perceived nature to be the kingdom of death, humans to be in a struggle to defeat death by self-denial, and God to be offering deification to humans by Grace. In this theology, God is able to commune with humanity, and humanity is able to escape the bonds of death and to be deified by Grace.[20] The Fall is not considered to be a catastrophe, and nature is not considered to be a prison from which to escape. Mystical and immanent communion with God is possible in this world. Reason plays a secondary role, mainly as a tool to combat heresies and heterodoxy, rather than to ascend toward the divine. In this theology, true knowledge of God is not transmittable by words, but is felt and experienced silently.

The Trinitarian God is able to commune with the world through what Greek theologians call energies and powers. Communion is theologically possible, because in the East the three persons of God are distinguished entities: collectivelly, one essence (*mia ousia*); individually, three substances (*treis hypostaseis*). Different substances allow meaningful communion, an interaction of love between the three. Love and communion with this world are an extension of this pre-ontological movement within the trinity. In Western theology, there is no substantive distinction between the three. As Augustine combated heretical claims about Jesus not being equal to the Father, his Trinitarian God became totally

19. Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, *op. cit.*

20. The present tense indicates that Eastern theology has changed very little since the 6th century's Patristic articles of Faith and Maximus the Confessor's theology of incarnation. See Armstrong, *A History of God*, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

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entrenched in itself. Consequently, there was no theological ground to assume the possibility of communion between the transcendental God and His creation.

It is no accident that technology stagnated in the years of the Byzantine Empire, and that there was nothing in the East to compare with the economic growth, urban rebirth, and scientific progress in Western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries. The Greek world became totally absorbed in the theology of a transcendental, yet still approachable and meaningful God. Such a cosmology was obliged to consider nature to be a symbolic domain, rather than one of exploitation and investigation, ready to be "tested" and subjugated. The Byzantines truly believed that they lived in Paradise on Earth, that the Emperor was the second Christ, and that they were God's chosen people. In a sense, the success of Eastern theology led to Byzantine social stagnation. Using "apophatic," negative statements about God, and avoiding excessive articulation of the divine, Eastern theology safeguarded the trans-rational character of the Trinity. The problem faced by the Latin West was irrelevant in the East. In the same vein, the failure of Western theology to safeguard its subject-matter was at least partially the cause of Western social dynamism. Pushed and pulled between reason and faith, Western thought became increasingly sharp, sophisticated, and practical. Instead of discouraging social developments, it came to their aid, providing them with expertise and scientific tools. The Church might have lost the battle, but it equipped the West with cognitive tools to break through to modernity and leave the agrarian circularity behind it.

Nature, Wilderness, and God

Twice before modernity, the West embraced ideologies that either rejected (Ionian materialism) or minimized (Platonism, Aristotelianism and Western theology) divine involvement in human affairs. In both cases, intellectual developments were supported by popular social changes and, in both cases, the result was increased interest in nature. Nature came to signify both the transcendental and the immanent domains, and the physical environment was perceived to be a realm of action, rather than reverence. If advances in applied science and technology in Hellenistic times were the result of Ionian, Platonist, and Aristotelian philosophies, medieval and modern economic dynamism, as well as technological progress, are the results of a Latin theology that dissected God to death.

Can this trend be reversed in order to return to a meaningful God? Is it possible to restore a deistic ontology and reject naturalism? Today, there is considerable indifference toward a monotheistic God. The idea of God developed over a long period of time and, in most instances, in unpredictable ways. Oliver's call for a return to a non-bracketed God to fill a philosophical gap is socially insignificant and absurd, though its logic is similar to Scholastic utilitarianism: "God is necessary, thus He exists," or "thus He should be brought back." It would be more logical to ask for a conversion to Eastern theology, since it alone could guarantee a

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meaningful, omnipresent, and truly trinitarian God. Yet, the move would be equally meaningless. Modernism killed God in the West as well as in the East, and He has been reduced to performing His minimal Durkheimian functions.

Any suggestion of a "return" to the past or conversion to other worldviews to save the world is simply wishful thinking. As long as it remains devoid of social meaning, the world is destined to remain an intellectual exercise. Yet, time and again, psychological yearning for a morally meaningful existence recruits God and nature to fill the void of lost meaning. The naturalist worldview usually encourages us to look to "nature," rather than to God, but what is meant by "nature" is "wilderness," i.e., an un-tamed, anti-, or non-cultural domain. This is how Oliver, Latour, and Harraway, among others, understand the concept. They fail to see that "wilderness" does not have an autonomous philosophical existence, but is thought to be the antithesis of cultural follies and contaminating human interference. In reality, speculation about wilderness and its worth distorts naturalism, since "wilderness" is not a distinct category in a naturalist cosmology. There is no substantive difference between an ancient forest "out there" and a suburban backyard garden. Wilderness is an icon of fear and desire, and belongs to a worldview other than naturalism. It is older than Axial Age discourses, and closer to the psycho-social urge to distinguish between the familiar and the exotic. In this psychological framework, the antithesis of wilderness is technology and the cultural apparatus that supports it. Nature is not an autonomous ontological realm, but a political metaphor to reject humanism and to embrace some nebulous and exotic blueprint. Its equivalent in the Hellenistic period would have been cynicism, paganism, and Bacchism in their myriad forms. Today, in the form of deep ecology, it is shaped primarily by romanticism and, to a lesser extent, by Oriental and cultic Western mysticism. In all cases, longing for a more "natural" and less cultural state of affairs came about as an offshoot of naturalism properly rebelling against the latter's excesses. Wilderness as such is an unstable concept, since it does not exist in itself. It is primarily a feeling triggered by the contact of urban dwellers with unfamiliar landscapes. In philosophical terms, it blends the transcendental and immanent qualities of nature into one realm. Yet, a post-Axial civilization cannot live in a Stone Age cosmology that does not distinguish between immanent and transcendental domains. Nevertheless, the idea of "wilderness" as "uncontaminated nature" will continue to be socially meaningful as long as there is dissatisfaction with culture and loyalty to atheism.

Even though notions of "wilderness" will probably continue to be meaningful in social imagination and ecological thought, the possibility cannot be excluded, no matter how small this might be, that the divine will be revived in the future. This prospect is grounded on a loose, though intriguing comparison of the current intellectual and political situation with that of late Hellenistic and Roman times. Both eras are characterized by relativism, subjectivity, and individualism,

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as well as globalism and cosmopolitanism.[21] *Mutatis mutandis*, both periods have experenced high social and geographic mobility, expanded international trade, and technological innovations, and both have witnessed the reign of empires. Syncretism led to the rise of conservative, soteriological religions as secure and absolute points of reference before the onslaught of the Christian message. Will multiculturalism and tolerance today lead to a similar path? The rise of fundamentalism suggests that the process might have begun. If this is correct, the new, socially significant religions will not consist of a return to past dogmas, as Oliver suggests, but, rather, of an unpredictable blend of old and new beliefs. In *Pax Romana*, it was primarily the blending of Orphism, Platonism, and Paulic Messianism. In *Pax Americana*, it might be the blending of theology, ecology, and what is still to come. Until then, "wilderness" will continue to be a central feature of ecological thought.

21. See E. A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (London, Jonathan Cape, 1957).

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*Enforcing "Human Rights": Rejoinder to Rick Johnstone**

Paul Gottfried

Rick Johnstone's plea for liberal federalism and a supranational mechanism for enforcing "human rights" is reminiscent of what Thomas Hobbes said about "Christian commonwealths." Behind their appeal to universal morality and religious doctrine was the frenzied attempt to shift rule "from Christian kings and sovereign assemblies absolute in their own territories" to "one Vicar of Christ, constituted of the universal church, to be judged, condemned, or deposed, or put to death as he shall think expedient, or necessary, for the common good." Johnstone is proposing or justifying a similar shift of authority for existing sovereign states to self-appointed vicars of the church of "human rights."

What makes the elevation of these new vicars particularly worrisome is the absence of a firmly established and widely accepted doctrine as the basis of the power being claimed by or for this "universal church." "Human rights" exemplifies the Ockhamite *flatus vocis*: it is pious noise signifying whatever journalists or victimologists want it to mean in a particular situation. There may be value in speaking about "universal morality." But what good are such appeals when political bureaucrats and scribblers elevate infanticide (aka partial birth abortion) to a "universal woman's right"? And what claim can Germans or Canadians make to uphold "liberal" rights when they throw people into jail (in the German case *en masse*) for expressing politically incorrect views? Perhaps Johnstone should turn to abuses closer to his own federalist home before embarking on global "liberal" crusades.[1] From the standpoint of traditional morality, the "darker side" of the Swiss case was not the lateness of the enactment of women's rights by the Swiss federal government, but the widespread availability of abortions in present-day feminized Switzerland. One man's (or woman's) human rights may be someone else's homicide.

The objections to Johnstone's liberal activism are both substantive and procedural. He avoids judging glaringly illiberal regimes imposed by Genevans and other Swiss Calvinist magistrates in the 16th and 17th centuries. Given his expressed views about human rights, it would seem that he would have no

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* Rick Johnstone, "Ethnic Purges and Neighborly Pacts: Reflections on a Swiss Statue," in Telos 115 (Spring 1999), pp, 49-59.

1. Note the state of civil liberties in Canada as described in the *Washington Post* (December 12, 1999).

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patience with these biblically judgmental societies and might deplore the failure to overthrow them, for the sake of persecuted atheists, adulterers, gays, and women. 16th-century Geneva, Basel, and Zurich were far closer politically to current Islamic republics than to multicultural Toronto.

Johnstone takes an even more problematic position. He wants to create or to defend mechanisms for upholding the "liberal human rights" content of his own kind of federalist structure. Unfortunately, he provides no genuine federalist alternative to what there is now, e.g., the feminized Swiss federal regime and the bogus federalism of the Eurocrats who not only impose socialist welfare state policies on their constituent members, but proclaim "years of anti-racism," together with mandating multicultural programs for once sovereign European countries. What is the cultural threshold beyond which members of the new world "liberal federalism" become subject to invasion and reconstruction? Is the failure to accept Third World immigrants, to extend universal suffrage, or to allow women into the work force sufficient grounds for offence and collective action by the new world order? Exactly what degree of imitation to his own preferred society must the rest of the world exhibit in order not to risk reprisals from those carrying nukes or enjoying military superiority? Reading Johnstone one gets the impression that Thrasymachus had a point about justice coming down to the advantage of the strong. In any case, offending small countries should make a note of this definition before running afoul of human rights enforcers.

Throughout his interventions,[2] Johnstone is setting up the situation of universal pan-interventionism that Hobbes saw as incompatible with civil order. What distinguishes this new theocratic world government from what Hobbes wrote about, however, is its reduction of morality to trendiness. Its interventionist imperative does not rest on a traditional or a demonstrable ethic. It rests rather on the accusation that whoever does not properly react to journalistic cases or the preferred values of intellectuals does not "care about human rights." If Johnstone seeks to oversee the commitment of other countries to *his* laundry list of rights, perhaps he should also offer to go to war the next time he and his fellow human rights mavens get the "liberal" crusades they want. Why make some clueless adolescent die for someone else's fashionability?

One last point may be in order to forestall a possible objection to this tirade. There are, of course, dangerous enemies who come along from time to time, such as Hitler and Stalin, whom the Western powers were justified in opposing militarily. Though both enemies might have been avoided if the American people had not backed Wilson's "crusade for democracy," or if the American government had tried *honestly* to make peace between the belligerents in WWI, it was necessary to combat powerful, expansionist enemies once they arose. But

2. See Rick Johnstone, "The Lessons of Auschwitz and Uri," in *Telos* 115 (Spring 1999), pp. 148-150. See also, in the same issue, Rick Johnstone, "Ethnic Purges and Neighborly Pacts: Reflections on a Swiss Statue," pp. 49-59.

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such opposition, as pointed out by George Kennan, did not require that Americans create their own doctrines in order to combat political enemies associated with imperialist ideologies. One might have opposed the French Communists, for example, like de Gaulle as "*le parti de l'Est*," those who served a foreign, hostile government and, therefore, deserved to be treated as outcasts. In any case, it was not necessary (pace *Commentary* magazine) to develop an American mission of global democracy to resist ideological and geopolitical expansionists. What made Communists and Nazis particularly dangerous was not their xenophobia or lack of universalism, but their insistence on forcing themselves on everyone else. Like today's "human rights" crusaders, totalitarians of an earlier generation had trouble minding their own business. They were intent on fashioning a personalized world order and had to break eggs in the process.

It is now unfashionable, even without the Cold War, to treat "democracies" and "non-democracies" in an equally dismissive manner. The distinction should be between those who mind their own business and those who suffer from an irresistible need to protect everyone from the "dark side." Johnstone is on the global ideological side of the divide. For him, decentralization seems to be an excuse in establishing a global theocracy to make everyone politically correct, though not necessarily virtuous.

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Liberalism, Absolutism, and Human Rights: Reply to Paul Gottfried

Rick Johnstone

Paul Gottfried and Paul Piccone wrongly confuse liberal activism with liberal absolutism, and anti-genocidal interventionism with Western imperialism. Gottfried claims that human rights are just "pious noise signifying whatever journalists or victimologists want it to mean in a particular situation," manipulated by the self-appointed vicars of the church of "human rights," whose "new theocratic world government" means a "reduction of morality to trendiness." Trendy theocrats? Is there some contradiction here? In his various comments on my work, and his critique of Victor Zaslavsky's views on totalitarianism,[1] Piccone rejects universal human rights and the liberal critique of totalitarian states — a theme echoed by Gottfried, who says that "like today's human rights crusaders, totalitarians of an earlier generation had trouble minding their own business." Kosovo as *Lebensraum*? Anti-genocidal intervention in the Balkans as no different from Hitler's "interventions" in Europe? Liberalism as not fundamentally different from communism? What planet is this?

Liberal Essentialism?: The Archimedean Leverage of Human Rights

Anti-liberals accuse liberal human rights of universalizing particular values in ways that imply some essential affinity of Western civilization with the human condition. But this is tilting at a straw man. It is like the old Marxist critique of Adam Smith as a "universalizer of human selfishness." Smith's more modest point was that, metaphysics aside, self-interest is a powerful force that can be harnessed to the social good by the free market, and thus resolve the post-feudal problem of how to produce wealth in a society of free citizens and to provide people with the things they actually want. Smith might agree that human society can work without markets, but would simply say that, at this stage of history (which is not exactly the hunter-gatherer stage) people are better off with markets than without. Likewise, the liberal view of human rights can be defended in historical, rather than metaphysical terms. That is the gist of my argument:[2] to

1. See Victor Zaslavsky, "The Katyn Massacre: 'Class Cleansing" as Totalitarian Praxis," in *Telos* 114 (Winter 1999), pp. 67-108; and Paul Piccone, "Introduction" to that issue, pp. 3-10.

2. See Rick Johnstone, "Ethnic Purges and Neighborly Pacts: Reflections on a Swiss Statue," in *Telos* (Spring 1999), pp. 49-59.

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portray post-Auschwitz universalism as a progressive social fact, a value that has acquired historical leverage. What is this social fact? Some extreme evils, like genocide, ethnic cleansing, mass murder, and state terror are now much less acceptable than before, and this is no accident, but rather a learned response to such evil. If the UN has gone beyond the League of Nations in its concern with rights, not just peace, that has been because of genocide, not just war. It was Auschwitz racism that led to UN universalism.

Moreover, this has ben a learned response, not just to such evil, but also to its defeat. This is not debating society stuff, but was resolved on the field of battle. As Auschwitz showed, evil values can also be social facts with plenty of leverage, and fascism would have prevailed more widely if not defeated in war. Among other things, the war was a power struggle between different values. While some may scoff at the idea of "lessons," the allied victory was secured only through enormous sacrifice, which deserves all the respect it has gotten. For the postwar survivors who framed the UN charter, there was no question about that. That sacrifice could not be allowed to mean nothing. Of course, this would not be defined just as a victory of liberalism, although as time went by it became more difficult for communists to deny the liberal implications of universal rights (as revealed, e.g., by anti-communist movements such as Solidarity, which invoked human rights). Even the communist bloc, during the Cold War, paid more than just lip service to the new consensus, the most obvious example of which was the anti-apartheid movement. The universal support of the anti-apartheid struggle was also no accident, but a clear sign of the emerging global human rights culture.

Auschwitz evil and Nazi defeat were thus a turning point. The idea that all human beings have dignity and rights, and should not be murdered for being different, has no more metaphysical certainty than any other value judgment. Yet, the new historical consensus gave it a leverage that is not true of just any value. Admittedly, as relativists insist, there is no Archimedean point in human affairs. But human rights have acquired a kind of Archimedean leverage (which is what actually mattered to Archimedes — not metaphysical certainty, but effective force). That all this was resolved in a power struggle does not have relativistic implications as post-modernists would imply. Power struggle does not mean that values cannot be held axiomatically, only that they cannot be proved axiomatically. Liberal universalism is indeed axiomatic, about human rights as individual rights. Whether such values prevail, however, is another matter. They do not "win," because they are "true," but because enough people have learned from experience that they are better than others. After Auschwitz and apartheid, the world has become more concerned about what neighbors are doing next door, and more willing to challenge extreme violations of the new consensus about human rights.

Armenians lived in less fortunate times. Of course, "better times" is relative, as the Tutsi in Rwanda would discover. But, since just about everyone on the planet agrees that Rwanda could and should have been prevented, the

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"Rwanda lesson" favors rather than rejects interventionism. True, the intervention issue is complex, but this does not justify total non-interventionism. Gottfried wants everyone to mind their own business, but then contradicts himself by admitting that Hitler had to be stopped. This contradiction is more of an honest awareness of complexity than some fatal flaw of argument, but it does lead back to history. All that can be expected here is some pragmatic compromise, based on a minimalist formula, that respects national sovereignty as far as possible and justifies intervention only in narrow terms, such as stopping genocide or ending apartheid. That is the situation today: a pragmatic compromise, both more and less interventionist than some might like, but better than nothing (and not the blank check for fanatical do-goodism that Gottfried rightly deplores). However imperfect or contingently mixed with sordid interests, it is not the cultural imperialism that its critics claim.

Human rights interventionism is ultimately a consensual-historical matter. That is the way most decisions are made, and it is not the end of the world. There are Cider House Rules, there is the real world where people make choices that seem to make the most sense. Of course, the idea of "lessons" is dangerous, and there is no shortage of wrong lessons (from the Maginot Line to the "Munich lesson" invoked by the domino theory in Vietnam). But wrong lessons do not mean no right ones, and the judge of that, again, is not metaphysics, but history. At any rate, since every value is historical, no value can be rejected just because it is. The critique of human rights as phoney universalism is a phoney critique, which can be turned on its head by agreeing that values are historical, but showing how some of these, like human rights, may acquire universal appeal. Human rights have become one of today's "historical universals," with a global momentum that, however imperfectly, does help to prevent persecution and pain.

Liberal Absolutism?: The Inherent Pluralism of Liberalism

Liberalism is also accused of "human rights absolutism": human rights as the shock troops of a "Western agenda." But this is nonsense, since, if anything, liberalism is the complete opposite. Here again, critics are tilting at a straw man, confusing agendas with absolutism. Human rights may be invoked by Western triumphalism in absolutist ways, but they are not simply reducible to that. Liberalism is inherently pluralistic in its freedom and individualism, its emphasis on individual rights and free choice, its procedural approach to politics and justice, and its principled refusal to be utopian or to reduce means to ends. Indeed, Western political pluralism reflects a deeper philosophical pluralism, which is the ultimate antidote to the philosophical absolutism underlying Leninist and Islamic states. Because human rights as individual rights are part of that Western package, they threaten oppressive regimes anywhere. So yes, liberal human rights do have an agenda. The difference is that the liberal agenda is the least absolutist around.

This is especially true when combined with federalism, which is the whole

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point of liberal federalism as a compromise human rights system. Federalism counters the arrogant side of liberal universalism (such as the cosmopolitan disdain for ties of place, and the hegemonic sweep of universal formulas), but liberalism counters the tribalistic side of federalism (such as group tyranny and local limitations). That is why liberal-federal systems, such as Canada and Switzerland, are precisely the opposite of the bizarre mix of Islamic-Calvinist absolutism Gottfried rails against. These are the least absolutist places in the world, which often makes them a target of jokes (e.g., the definition of Canada as "the largest country in the world that does not exist.") Such "non-existence" is hardly a good tool for domination.

In the end, then, both historical trends and the substance of Western values add up to a very strong case for liberal human rights. The current popularity of liberalism leaves its critics with few places to go, and dangerously close to the disastrous old fall-back of "false consciousness" (the West is made up of dupes and morons who shop at Wal-Mart, do not have "true freedom," and have just got it all wrong). The historical leverage of human rights leaves these critics in an awkward debate with the victims of terror and genocide, who in their own defence invoke human rights, without which they may be seen as mere bugs to be squashed. That is why victims of regimes which de-construct human bodies are relieved to know that Amnesty International has not been taken over by French philosophy students, who de-construct human rights.

Human rights arguments and intervention debates are not easily resolved. In the meantime, one can be pragmatic about how lives are saved, as long as they are. There is nothing wrong with that. There is no magic formula or philosophical fix. It does not matter how genocide ends, as long as it does. Thus, people have already forgotten how the Idi Amin and Pol Pot regimes finally came to an end. If it takes some *ad hoc* police actions, in which the neighbors simply bust in the door, so be it. Waiting for the UN in New York to get it right may mean waiting forever. Perhaps one day it will, and that would be for the best. The more consensus about intervention the better, and a global police force is better than the US Air Force. The important thing today is that genocide is harder to get away with than before. Even just mentioning Hitler may cause a storm. As the 21st century begins, Austrian squares once filled with Nazis now fill with anti-Nazis. If this is not a step forward, what is?

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"Human Rights" as "Historical Universals"?

Paul Piccone

Once a vocation, being an intellectual today has become a profession. Like day traders or divorce lawyers, "public intellectuals" pack their briefcases in the morning and off they go to make a living in "the public sphere." Unlike day-traders and divorce lawyers, however, who at least have no illusions as to who they are and what they do, public intellectuals still pretend to follow a higher calling. They like to see themselves as the theoretical vanguard of an otherwise inarticulate and unsophisticated mass in need of guidance. Of course, this is nothing new. As in the dark ages of "pre-modernity," when priests and shamans mediated between the visible and the invisible, the given and the giver, the known and the unknown, public intellectuals still pretend to totalize culture and to retail it piecemeal for everyday consumption. This assumption is so widespread that the only occasional and rather modest lament, by more "critical" intellectuals, is that they no longer do even that and, instead, only talk among themselves in a jargon inaccessible to the masses and meant to camouflage as profundities what, on closer scrutiny, turn out to be trivialities and *non sequiturs*. Their main occupational hazard is that, in order to be credible, they have to construct and to legitimate the transcendental universalist ideology they subsequently market as "the truth."

Whereas there was once a common culture to mediate and elaborate, today it is difficult to defend anything of the kind. Unwilling to be relegated to the local level, most public intellectuals opt for a cosmopolitan public sphere populated exclusively by their peers, selected by their ability to converse effectively in the predominant lingo about what they themselves certify as "legitimate" topics. Thus, if the overwhelming majority of people cannot access this public sphere other than indirectly, through their alleged representatives, who usually end up transubstantiating their own particular interests into those of their constituencies, the very concept of a "public sphere" is terminally tainted by a democratic deficit. Worse yet, in the process of legitimating this public sphere and its rules of access as neutral and value-free, public intellectuals tend to hypostatize the principles presupposed by such a framework to the level of universal values. From these allegedly necessary preconditions, they proceed to reabsolutize the same cultural idiosyncrasies (whose particularity and artificiality had precipitated the crisis of modernity) into apodictic liberal values, thus circumscribing the heterogeneity of the democratic constituency whose will they appeal to as their political foundation. That radical pluralism necessary for true democracy is automatically homogenized within this

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axiological framework, which denies it its very unconditional diversity and gives way to a multicultural zoo, where the various cultures can roam freely only within their particular cages, under the close surveillance of liberal zookeepers — public intellectuals and their bureaucratic associates — whose managerial rule is enforced as neutral, and, therefore, unproblematic. Procedural universalism ends up trumping all other particular values, and gradually replacing earlier dogmatic religions. "Human rights" become the liberal glue reducing politics to administration and checkmating all real politics as irrational squabbles.

This maneuver is meant to solve the problem of relativism in the West, following the split of the *res publica Christiana* into a multiplicity of conflicting denominations, and the disintegration of the *jus publicum Europaeum* following the discovery of radically different lands and cultures plunged Western civilization into its perplexing relativistic predicament. At the dawn of modernity, the immediate response was simply to continue earlier practices in dealing with barbarians, infidels, and non-believers, and thus to regard all other cultures or denominations as inferior, misled, or primitive. Thus, it was merely a matter of upgrading, civilizing, or developing these "others" by turning them into the "same," or by converting dissidents back into orthodoxy. The real agenda, however, soon emerged as one of subjugation, exploitation, and domination. When missionaries and their secular counterparts, the anthropologists, could no longer normalize the sheer exploitation and greed of colonialism and imperialism, it became necessary to transform what had turned out to be yet another particular culture into a new, universally-valid ideology able to re-totalize and control an otherwise uncontrollable heterogeneity.

The birth of liberalism is rooted in this historical junction. Today's universalistic pretenses end up grounded either on secularized religious dogmatism or on a shaky consensualism, i.e., by appealing to the functional equivalent of divine revelation or by persuading everyone to accept certain particular mandates as binding. The first strategy occasionally works, as it did earlier in the case of Christianity and Islam, but is usually imposed by force, considerable bloodshed and the constant repression of dissenting factions, thus undermining any claim to privileged access to truth. The second gives up any absolutist pretences altogether and tries to make do with whatever consensus it can muster. While probably as good a solution as can be expected, this second strategy is weakened by several limitations. Its constitutive principles can never be stronger than the size of the consensus supporting them. They are always subject to radical revisions and, therefore, not binding on anyone not part of the original political unit though which the consensus was reached. In fact, participating in the formation of the subsequent consensus and accepting its outcome as binding is precisely what defines a political unit as such.

Liberalism turns into a dogmatic ideology when it forgets these limitations and hypostatizes its contingent consensual foundations into universally valid

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truths, enforceable whenever feasible. This is what happens with Rick Johnstone's efforts to sell "human rights," not as probably a good idea which everyone *should* accept, but as the basis for universally binding mandates. He ends up confusing apologies for *Realpolitik* with a universal morality he knows all too well is impossible to defend. Thus, as odious as the Rwanda massacres may have appeared to be to Western sensibilities, it is foolish to appeal to "human rights violations" as a justification for intervention. At any rate, it never happened, because Western powers had nothing at stake in Rwanda and did not need any excuse to camouflage the defense of their interests. The concept of "rights," in its specifically Western sense of a secular version of inalienable attributes of the soul, is probably foreign to Hutus and Tutsis, who have never been signatories to any binding contract mandating respect for "human rights. Rather, in addition to cases involving clear national interests, international intervention can be defended on the ground that what happens in places such as Kosovo, Chechnya, Rwanda, etc. is incompatible with Western Judeo-Christian values, and the West has the military clout to do something about it. At that point, however, the conundrum of whether the life of a zillion Tutsis is worth one American casualty kicks in. Since it is not feasible simply to bomb jungle-dwellers into submission or to confront Russian barbarism in Chechnya, and since direct military engagement (with casualties) would have been unavoidable, by now everyone knows the answer to that riddle. Genocide in Kosovo was halted, because the Serbs' ethnic cleansing there would have caused chaos in the Balkans, thus threatening to destabilize Europe and, *ipso facto*, the US, and the problem could be dealt with by bombing instead of sending in the infantry.

Why do Johnstone and other liberals need to invoke indefensible transcendental imperatives to justify the Kosovo intervention? Because liberal intellectuals cannot make decisions and do not dare expose their choices as the products of their own particular wills. It is more risk-free to act as functionaries of higher mandates, thereby avoiding responsibility for questionable outcomes. Johnstone, however, knows that this will not pass muster: today all higher mandates are suspected of concealing lower interests and predilections. So, he takes the easy way out and pulls "historical universals" out of his philosophical hat: if something is the result of a general consensus, then it is as good as a universally valid mandate.

What is gained by appealing to "human rights" as "historical universals" to legitimate particular choices predicated on the defense of particular interests? It is a charade that fools some, but not all. The lame philosophical rhetoric does not wash. In the Kosovo case, the Serbs remained unfazed, the Europeans were strong-armed into showing support for something they were not really interested in, and the outcome is no more legitimate now than it would have been had the US simply gone ahead and done what it wanted to do in the first place. The pretense of a universal or quasi-universal consensus makes no difference either way. It is but a moralistic placebo, totally inconsequential to outcomes. It was not

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human rights that defeated Nazism, but military superiority, and it was not human rights but *Realpolitik* that triggered American intervention in WWII. Nazi persecution of the Jews was known long before the US decided to intervene, and, well into the 1960s, there was hardly any serious discussion of the Holocaust. It is too easy to find ideological covers for the most diverse hidden agendas.

Johnstone's Panglossian worldview leads him to naive political conclusions. As recent events show, it is *not* harder now to get away with genocide than before, unless one is a misguided tinhorn dictator like Saddam Hussein, or a megalomaniac like Milesovic, unwittingly threatening powerful interests. The Russian and Chinese leadership, whose military clout is considerably greater, do not have much to worry about violations of human rights in Chechnya or Tibet and the commercial consequences of any abstract moralism are much too great. Johnstone rejoices that "Austrian squares once filled with Nazis now fill with anti-Nazis." But Nazism is a ghost from the past, with no chance whatsoever of having any political impact anywhere. It is recycled today only as a negative symbol to legitimate an otherwise vacuous Left-liberal ideology in need of a viable enemy. Conversely, anti-Nazism is, at best, a no-cost, convenient road to virtuosity. Fulminating against a careless loudmouth like Haider may make some Austrians and the politically correct Western power elite feel better about themselves, but it does not obviate the fact that Haider is no different from most other European politicians, has no clue as to what to do with the problems of cybernated societies, and his views about immigration are widespread within most Western societies, from California to France and Belgium, among people that would hardly qualify as Nazis. If the recent Austrian demonstrations are to be taken as a measure of moral progress, they only provide evidence that there has probably been none. The public sphere remains a place of manipulation and indoctrination, public intellectuals continue to legitimate themselves as moral paladins by constructing Nazi windmills, and, like the "good" Germans of the 1930s, today's citizens still compromise with institutional corruption and deception by minding their own business, thus becoming unwitting accomplishes in the process. Honest intellectuals, with no need of public certification and no universally valid truths to retail, should call a spade a spade, rather than excogitating useless oxymorons such as "historical universals" and trotting out "human rights" as moralistic placebos in a world increasingly becoming institutionally a-moral.

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Reviews:

Analytic Philosophy: RIP

Nicholas Capaldi, *The Enlightenment Project in the Analytic Conversation* (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 532 pp. + xiv.

This book is a devastating and anomalous critique of analytic philosophy. It is devastating, because of its detailed exposition of analytic philosophy as a failed project. It is anomalous, because the exposition involves writing a detailed history of the analytic movement, an activity that analysts have scrupulously avoided. According to Capaldi, while analytic philosophy pretends to express a timeless explanation about everything, the movement has always sought to justify its existence by ultimate appeal to a progressive historical account, and rests on the presumption that science is the final historical form of a timeless truth, thereby subsuming the history of philosophy under the history of science (p. 395). He proceeds to develop four theses: 1) The Enlightenment Project (the attempt to use naturalistic science to define, explain and deal with the human predicament) has been a continuously important element in analytic philosophy; 2) The Enlightenment Project's generally perceived failure accounts for a large part of the soul-searching that characterizes the contemporary Western scene, especially within parts of the analytic movement; 3) A two-part account of why the Enlightenment Project has, and must, fail, in which Capaldi identifies two stages within the analytic movement: eliminationism (positivism, the explicit attempt to substitute new for old ideas) and exploration (contemporary analytic philosophy, the replacement of an ordinary [pre-theoretical] understanding of how things work with appeal to "hidden meaning"), and he calls this recognition of a pre-theoretical understanding of accepted practices the analytic conversation's "Kantian Turn"; and 4) A "practical" way exists to regain contact with the pre-theoretical: "explication" (pp. 2-5).

Capaldi asumes that there is a cosmic order, and that this order can be accessed through practical self-understanding of universal truths about self-interest. Since the cosmic order can be accessed through self-understanding, and this self-understanding through science, "the Enlightenment Project is misguided" (p. 5). Self-understanding is achieved by examining practices derived from cultural norms. Epistemologically, social norms are a function of the larger community. Historical norms are identified by considering later practices evolving from earlier

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norms and capable of revealing better understandings of a norm. Norms are implicit, inasmuch as they are internal to actions, not external in structures. Such persistent and enduring norms reflect universals. While the practice of retrieving this moral framework takes different forms in different historical contexts, retrieving it "is a permanent part of the human condition" (pp. 5-6). Because these truths are contextualized as part of traditions, retrieving them necessarily requires reformulation. In some way, the past must be re-appropriated. Traditions are not rigid structures, but fertile sources of adaptation that evolve and expand. No surprise, then, that there are constant fights over the cosmic order's articulation.

Capaldi maintains that philosophy is an intellectual and moral quest: "Philosophers are intellectually and morally obligated to engage in a perpetual retrieval of their tradition" (p. 6). He sees natural language as the clearest example that the meaning of everything cannot be definitively articulated. Natural languages are unplanned inherent structures that philosophy assumes to do its work. Because natural language is presupposed by speech, explanations about language in terms of its theoretical structure cannot capture the pre-theoretical sense of language as a cultural norm. Capaldi claims that philosophy's unique task is to explicate cultural lessons, to articulate and to criticize civilization's fundamental values. He thinks that much of contemporary philosophy reverses philosophy's priorities. Cosmic understanding has become fundamental; self-understanding, derivative.

Philosophy's health requires going beyond the Enlightenment Project. To do this, Capaldi maintains that this project must be understood along with the crucial role analytic philosophy plays in it. Hence, his book is "an extended argument against the voice of the Enlightenment Project within the analytic conversation" (p. 8). His general argument is that the Enlightenment Project models sciences dealing with the human condition (philosophy, the social sciences, philosophical psychology, and epistemology) on a particular and defective notion of physical science. This defective notion proceeds in two ways: it engages in the endless pursuit of hidden structures to explain the cosmos; and it constantly redefines data to provide a better fit for defective hidden-structure accounts. These defective concepts of the human condition, in turn, lead to a defective understanding of moral and political philosophy: social engineering or social technology.

Capaldi adds that two defenses of the Enlightenment Project's concept of physical science or of the human condition can be mounted: one substantive; the other, rhetorical. Both are inadequate. The substantive defense fails "to respond to the charge that analytic explorations are bogus intellectual enterprises" (p. 9). It concedes that it cannot provide a successful example of an exploration; cannot state what, in principle, would constitute a successful exploration; and, nonetheless, assumes that the concept of science with which it works is correct, thereby begging the question. The rhetorical defense is twofold. First, those who criticize analytic philosophy "are only tilting at windmills that exist only in the mind of the critic" (p. 9). Often, analytic philosophers bogusly defend their enterprise

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by maintaining, against their own substantive defense, that analytic philosophy is a method, not a set of substantive beliefs. In short, analytic philosophers can only agree that their enterprise consist in formulating exploratory hypotheses. They have no way to choose among competing explorations. Second, critics of individual analytic philosophers' statements misconstrue the framework for interpreting their views, or select outdated or atypical views to criticize.

If critics misconstrue the framework for these views, Capaldi maintains, analytic philosophers have an intellectual duty to specify the framework and to provide "criteria for assessing rival frameworks" (p. 9). Specifically, to misconstrue a position is to hold a different exploratory account. Analytic philosophy provides no means of choosing between competing exploratory accounts. In short, analytic philosophers must give a context against which to measure their claims, which they refuse to do or contend cannot be done. If critics supposedly select atypical or outdated views, analytic philosophers must provide a historical account of the analytic conversation. They fail to do this. In the absence of a comprehensive view about their activity, analytic philosophers are in no position to determine what is or is not typical. If it has no set of shared beliefs, the analytic conversation has no commonality in terms of which to distinguish the typical from the atypical. Moreover, this defense of analytic philosophy presumes that later views are better, and that the latest versions are immune to criticism from the viewpoint of earlier accounts or have considered and transcended earlier critiques.

In Capaldi's view, analytic philosophy never provides a context for interpreting its claims. It has no objective determinant of progress within the movement. Its claim to progress "is part of the mythology of the Enlightenment Project" (p. 10). The quasi-scientific rhetoric analytic philosophers use to defend their view that the later version is better reflects the Enlightenment Project's scientism. Since analytic philosophers provide no argument in defense of their scientism, there is no *a priori* reason to accept their rhetoric of progress. Far from offering new and improved versions of analytic philosophy, Capaldi maintains that later versions are largely recycled, one level removed accounts of earlier versions. When considered against the background of the history of philosophy, it turns out that what appears to the ahistorically-minded analytic philosopher as transcending objections to earlier versions are simply recycled restatements that do not address the challenge to the principles of analytic philosophy as a whole.

In response to analytic philosophy's rhetorical defense, Capaldi offers a simple challenge: produce one "example of analytic philosophy that does not fall into the abyss of exploration" (p. 10). If it can do so, then his entire thesis will be refuted. Capaldi does not think analytic philosophers are up to the challenge. If they cannot meet it, he claims he will have shown "that the analytic conversation encompasses a large number of bogus intellectual enterprises" sustained by the Enlightenment Project's "quest for a social technological utopia" (p. 11). The consequence of this bogus project is nihilism. Enlightenment mythology undermines the entire cultural

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context, "including the context that sustains philosophy and science. It is no accident that the current crisis of confidence in Western civilization in general and modern liberal culture in particular reflects increasing awareness that the Enlightenment Project has failed" (p. 11). In so doing, Capaldi maintains that analytic philosophy betrays the Socratic heritage: it discourages critical self-examination.

Capaldi locates his argument against the Enlightenment Project within the analytic conversation in twelve densely-packed chapters, in which he considers and criticizes all major figures in logical positivism and analytic philosophy: Russell, Carnap, Kripke, Ayer, Kuhn, Feyerband, Davidson, Tarski, Moore, Gödel, Chomsky, Montague, Marcus, Popper, Putnam, Frege, Fodor, Dummett, Hare, Prichard, Donagan, Nozick, MacIntyre, Rorty, Rawls, Wittgenstein, *et.al.* He focuses special attention on the ways the analytic conversation reflects the Enlightenment Project: metaphysically, epistemologically, and axiologically.

Metaphysically, analytic philosophy adheres to a monistic naturalism/scientism. It views the world as self-explanatory, considers metaphysical truth to be equivalent to the structure revealed by the philosophy of science, and maintains a continuity between human beings and nature that allows the use of grammatical criteria to identify fundamental realities. In its scientism, analytic philosophy considers science to be intellectually autonomous and self-legislating: the whole truth about everything; basic science to be physical science; the world to be ontologically purposeless, mechanical system composed of discrete entities, atoms, that retain their character irrespective of context, interact according to natural laws in ways that can be understood as a serial, causal sequence; science to be a unity whose subjects are a special kind of objects, that views world-understanding as fundamental, self-understanding as derivative, and models social science after the physical sciences; scientific explanations to be superior to all others (because they uncover an objective, realist, structure that exists independently of the observer, express that structure's necessary causal relations, relate deductively, and can be empirically verified); and explanations to be eliminative reductions or exploratory hypotheses about reality's hidden substructure.

Epistemologically, analytic philosophy is analytic, realist, empiricist, and anti-self (anti-agency). It is analytic, because the account of the physical world supposedly is the ground for any account of the process by which knowledge is gained, and knowledge is a reduction to discrete parts. It is realist, because knowing is simply a reflection of an external structure, totally independent of the observer, and scientistic explanations start with truths that ultimately and exclusively refer to these structures. It is empiricist, because it construes experience as an internal processing of external physical structures, as the means through which the truths that refer to objective structures is accessed, and "meaningful thoughts (or concepts) . . . either originate in or cash out into experience without remainder" (p. 13). It is anti-self and anti-agency, because analytic philosophy views the self as a concatenation of sub-objects and action as a concatenation of discrete parts; the internal processing of this concatenated self can be explained only by

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reference to the world's substructure, not by reference to any internal act of the agent; and knowledge of this hidden substructure overrules the agent's self-understanding of personal action, to explain away history and culture through eliminative and exploratory social science.

Axiologically, analytic philosophy subordinates practical to theoretical knowledge, attempts to explain practical knowledge in terms of theoretical knowledge, dichotomizes facts and values, and sees values as epiphenomena. For the analyst, only facts can be true, because they alone refer to reality's hidden substructures. Since value judgments do not refer to these hidden structures, they are not truths. This means that a physical-scientific and/or social-scientific account of the contextual substructure within which values operate can be provided, and, ultimately, practical knowledge can be explained in theoretical terms. In this view, human psychology exists on a two-tier level: a deterministic, materialist substructure of mechanistic drives that explains an epiphenomenal level of values. Being mechanistic, these drives are not cultural. They seek a homeostasis or maximization that overrules specific norms. Freedom as the absence of arbitrary external constraints, where the restraints are determined to be arbitrary relative to the fundamental drives, is the only concept of freedom compatible with this psychology. Moral freedom involves the inner sanction of autonomous agents. Analytic philosophy's axiology rules out such freedom. In its place, it substitutes a political concept of freedom that allows for a social technology to control volition and a political concept of morality based on external social sanctions. Purportedly, this substructure reveals basic universal drives to allow us automatic or causal responses to information about its structure.

Capaldi maintains that when a cultural, i.e., a social and historical dimension is added to analytic philosophy's social epistemology, the result is a Hegelian ethics by which analytic philosophy seeks to make its Enlightenment Project intelligible. In addition, he claims that various forms of liberal, socialist, and Marxist social and political planning subscribe to the same two-tier psychology that allows for a social engineering to make human beings compatible and cooperative. He views the Enlightenment Project as a modern, truncated form of Aristotelianism, a deconstructed, mechanized, unteleological naturalism that claims to be able to abstract the hidden structure of reality and to make mental acts intelligible. While the doctrine of abstraction makes sense within the context of classical Aristotelian philosophy, it makes no sense in modern epistemology in which mental processing — not hidden substructures — are the direct objects of knowledge. As a result, Capaldi maintains that only Hegelian metaphysics can provide the epistemology analytic philosophy needs to explain its own activity. "Hegelian metaphysics is the only modern form of Aristotelianism that succeeds in achieving totalization. It does so by providing for the consistency and coherence of ontological and epistemological realism" (p. 117). Hegelian metaphysics claims to be realist inasmuch as

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"To be real is to be a member of a rational system such that the parts of the system can only be understood when the system as a whole is understood" (p. 118).

Along with many others, Capaldi marks the start of analytic philosophy with Russell's rejection of Hegelian idealism. Unlike others, however, he maintains that Russell's rejection of Hegel did not constitute a rejection of idealism as such. Russell rejected Hegel's notion that individual truths cannot be known "prior to knowing their role within a comprehensive system" (p. 118). According to Capaldi, "*crucial to idealism is the belief that to be real is to be part of a system*" (p. 119). Instead of a rejection of idealism, analytic philosophy is an irrational attempt within the Enlightenment Project to make this project intelligible through a rejection of its modern subjective idealist roots and the adoption of a notion of abstraction totally alien to its metaphysics.

While correct in almost every aspect, this work has its faults. For example, Capaldi uses the terms "theoretical" and "practical" in ways that may confuse some people. As a result, he often calls things practical that Aristotelians and others would call theoretical. At times, he appears to confound metaphysics and ethics, to reduce universals solely to the moral domain, and to be overly critical of the notion of abstraction. He mistakenly attributes the rise of anti-systematic philosophy to *philosophes* like Condillac and d'Alembert. While these thinkers rejected the notion of systematic metaphysics, they did not reject the notion of system as such. They generally embraced the universe as a materialist system. Furthermore, Capaldi's solution to the Enlightenment Project might be subject to some of the criticism that he levels against the analysts, e.g., that he tends to subordinate knowledge to linguistic usage by making self-understanding overly dependent on social and cultural factors. But, whatever faults the work might have, it is a formidable, first-rate piece of scholarship. Anyone interested in contemporary philosophy should read it. Analysts, especially, must answer it, or agree with Capaldi: the analytic project is a "*failed endeavor to promote realism through scientism*" (p. 459).

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Carl Schmitt and Modern Law

William Scheuerman, *Carl Schmitt, The End of Law* (London/New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 344pp., $23.40.

Apart from a few exceptions,[1] studies of Carl Schmitt in English have not dealt with the legal and constitutional aspects of his work. William Scheuerman's book begins to fill this gap. His work is an important corrective to previous interpretations which, by disproportionally emphasizing the cultural and theological aspects of Schmitt's work, have neglected its central legal character, thus reducing one of the most influential jurists of the 20th century either to a right-wing cultural critic or to a dissatisfied crypto-theologian.[2] Among other consequences, this neglect has contributed to disregarding themes that are pivotal to Schmitt's thinking.[3] Scheuerman focuses on Schmitt's uninterrupted interest in the crisis of modern law, and thereby succeeds in demonstrating

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1. See Ulrich Preuss, "Constitutional Powermaking for the New Polity: Some Deliberations on the Relations between Constituent Power and the Constitution," in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol.14, Nos. 3-4 (1993), pp. 639-660; "Political Order and Democracy: Carl Schmitt and his Influence," in *Social System, Rationality, and Revolution*, edited by Leszek Nowak and Martin Paprzycki (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 15-40; and *Constitutional Revolution. The Link Between Constitutionalism and Progress*, translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider (New Jersey: Humanity Press, 1995); also, Peter Caldwell, *Popular Sovereignty and the Crisis of German Constitutional Law. The Theory and Practice of Weimar Constitutionalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

2. For the cultural interpretation, see Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and John McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). For the theological interpretation, see Heinrich Meier, *Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss. The Hidden Dialogue*, translated by J. Harvey Lomax with a foreword by Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995) and *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt. Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, translated by Marcus Brainard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998). For a critical response to these readings, see Jean-François Kervégan, "L'enjeu d'une théologie politique: Carl Schmitt," in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, No. 2 (1995); Olivier Beaud, "L'art d'ecrire chez un juriste," in *Le droit, le politique. in Autour de Max Weber, Hans Kelsen, Carl Schmitt*, edited by Carlos-Miguel Herrera (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), pp. 15-36; and Agostino Carriro, "Carl Schmitt and European Juridical Science," in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, edited by Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 376-379.

3. For a critique of the "cultural" interpretation, see Scheuerman, "Review of John McCormick," in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (December 1998), pp. 376-377; for a critique of the "theological" interpretation, see Scheuermann, *Carl Schmitt: The End of Law*, pp. 3, 249, 258-259.

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Schmitt's place in the legal historiography of this century. Specifically, Scheuermann argues that Schmitt's political thought can be understood only within the context of the gradual deformalization and materialization of 19th century liberal jurisprudence, which he characterizes as the rise of "legal indeterminacy." Precisely for this reason, so the argument goes, Schmitt subjected the liberal legal tradition to a fervent critique.

Against the utopian aspirations of the legal paradigm of classical liberalism to regulate, control and contain political power through the deployment of formal, codified and strictly-defined legal norms that ideally would guarantee the security and freedom of individuals against a potentially dangerous state, Schmitt pointed to the internal inconsistencies and insurmountable dilemmas plaguing the liberal paradigm of formal law. The more general and impersonal the legal rules had become, the more vague they appeared to be, and the more vulnerable they had become to the discretionary interpretation of judges and to the arbitrary interventions of the executive in concrete cases. Schmitt also pointed to external social and political developments that had contributed to the deepening of this crisis. The entry of the masses into the political sphere, the replacement of the qualitative minimal state with the interventionist, quantitative total state, the consequent fusion of society and state, and the crisis of traditional bourgeois, parliamentary representation also played a major role in discrediting the liberal legal paradigm.

Although Scheuerman does not say so, there is no doubt that Schmitt's diagnosis of the dual crises of the liberal rule of law (internal and external) revealed the tremendous consequences of the paradigmatic shift from formal to material law and the growing influence of discretionary, unregulated and arbitrary forms of adjudication within the legal systems of the modern welfare state. Similarly, Schmitt's discussion of legal indeterminacy anticipated recent debates on the transformation of law and the change of legal paradigms.[4] Within this broader historical context, his critique of liberal constitutionalism, the rule of law, the separation of powers, liberal representation, legalism, and, according to Scheuerman, his infamous and shameless support of National Socialism can be reformulated as various aspects of his confrontation with the indeterminacy of law.

Scheuerman attempts to prove the continuity of Schmitt's works, especially those written during the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. For Scheuerman,

4. For a discussion of the paradigmatic shift in legal theory, see Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism. Ideology, Policy, and the Crisis of Public Authority* (New York: Norton, 1969); *Dilemmas of Law in the Welfare State*, ed. by Gunther Teubner (New York/Berlin: European University Institute, 1988); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. by William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 388-446; Andrew Arato, "Procedural Law and Civil Society: Interpreting the Radical Democratic Paradigm," in *Habermas on Law and Democracy. Critical Exchanges*, ed. by Michel Rosenfeld and Andrew Arato (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 26-36,

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Schmitt's decision to join the Nazi Party in 1933 was the logical culmination of his entire intellectual and political trajectory.[5] He asserts that Schmitt's critique of liberalism is permeated with authoritarian and even totalitarian elements that, although not central, are nonetheless recognizable in his earliest writings — that the only difference is one of degree.[6] Scheuerman's second and more ambitious aim is to discredit current criticisms of liberal jurisprudence by radical, mainly North American leftists associated with Critical Legal Studies (CLS). If Schmitt's work still has some importance, for Scheuermann it is because it represents a perfect example of the inherent and dangerous affinities between radical criticisms of the liberal rule of law, on the one hand, and authoritarian political outcomes, on the other. He alledges that the rejection of legal formalism and the deconstruction of the universalistic and rationalistic elements of liberalism necessarily prepare the way for a discretionary, unregulated, and arbitrary political regime.

Though a conservative thinker associated with the Right, Schmitt is used by Scheuerman as a warning against today's leftist critics of liberalism.[7] Ultimately, Scheuermanns book poses an unavoidable political choice of immense moral

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5. In this sense, Scheuerman's work can be seen as a direct response to attempts to disassociate Schmitt's political theory from his personal political decisions in 1933. See Joseph Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the Political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989); and Paul E. Gottfried, *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990.)

6. In a recent study, Chris Thornill convincingly demolishes the "Nazi" reading of Schmitt that Scheuerman, among others, has promulgated. With a careful and unbiased reading of Schmitt's text written just prior to 1933, and, in particular, a detailed reconstruction of Schmitt's distinction between a *qualitative* and a *quantitative* total state, Thornill demonstrates the huge differences between Schmitt's political and legal theory, and Nazi ideology. First, Schmitt criticized rather harshly any effort to bring about a total politicization of all spheres of life, and, in particular, maintained that there must be a strict differentiation between the public and the private spheres. Second, Schmitt attacked the model of a total party, of which the NSDAP was a representative example. Third, for these reasons, Schmitt was a staunch opponent of the Party-State that the Nazis established after January 1933. Finally, as Thornill argues: "Schmitt's reflections on representation and identity resist easy appropriation by modern totalitarianism." Thus, rather than being considered a justufication of Nazism, Schmitt's Weimar writings should be viewed as "a defense of the Weimar governmental apparatus." See Chriss Thornill, *Political Theory in Modern Germany: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), pp. 84-90. See also Carl Schmitt, "Strong State and Sound Economy: An Address to Business Leaders" [1932], in Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 212-232, and "Weiterentwicklung des totalen Staates in Deutschland" [1933] in Carl Schmitt, *Positionen und Begriffe im Kamp mit Weimar — Genf — Versailles 1923-1939* [1940] (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988), pp. 210-211 and 213.

7. The idea of criticizing a contemporary legal movement of the Left through a conservative thinker of the Right raises serious problems. This is not the occasion to take up this aspect of Scheuerman's analysis. Suffice it to say, however, that nowhere in his book does Scheuerman develop a persuasive argument for his case.

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proportions: either liberalism or totalitarianism in its various persuasions (Right or Left). Although, in his previous studies, he employed a terminology reminiscent of leftist social democracy, in some passages in this volume he exhibits a strong and quite uncritical nostalgia for the good old days of 19th century liberalism, despite tremendous developments in contemporary legal thought and enormous social and economic changes that have relativized the value of the classical liberal utopia, and that, not incidentally, are at the center of Schmitt's intellectual and political preoccupations.[8]

In view of the two major aims of Scheuermann's book, it must be said that the second part of the volume departs significantly from the first, which focuses on legal indeterminacy. The aim of the second part is to demonstrate Schmitt's hidden and "subterranean influence" on "authoritarian right-wing political theory" in the US, particularly in the thinking of Joseph Schumpeter, Friedrich A. Hayek, and Hans Morgenthau, rather than to substantiate the claim advanced in the first part. Of course, there is nothing wrong with such a project. But Scheuerman's effort to perpetuate the conventional demonized depiction of Schmitt hardly can contribute to a serious examination of Schmitt's influence on American conservatism. Moreover, the arguments he advances are very questionable. For example, he maintains that Schmitt and Schumpeter shared a similar fascination for charismatic leaders, and he speculates that Schumpeter's democratic elitism might have been a result of Schmitt's plebiscitarianism. Given the fact that there is no textual evidence regarding charisma and charismatic legitimacy in Schmitt's writings, this is, to say the least, unconvincing. Similarly, Scheuerman's assertion about "Hayek's reliance on Schmitt" is substantiated nowhere. The fact that both authors attacked the welfare state does not mean that they did it for the same reasons or even that they based themselves on the same premises. With this kind of argument, anyone who criticizes the interventionist state — from the Left or the Right — would have to be characterized as an offspring of Schmitt! With respect to the alledged relation between Schmitt and Morgenthau regarding "political realism," there is no textual evidence in Schmitt's pre-1933 writings that he celebrated "the lust for power."

Although Scheuermann's book represents one of the most elaborate attempts to establish the continuity of Schmitt's thinking and to link his Weimar writings with his adherence to National Socialism, it fails. In his effort to argue for the "elective affinity" between the earlier and the later Schmitt, Scheuerman advances two incompatible and even antagonistic arguments that cancel each other out. On the one hand, he asserts that Schmitt first embraced an unregulated executive, plebiscitarian-based dictatorship, and then Nazism, because of his

8. See William Scheuerman, *Between the Norm and the Exception. The Frankfurt School and the Rule of Law* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994), and *The Rule of Law Under Siege. Selected Essays of Franz L. Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer*, ed. by William Scheuerman (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996).

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enchantment with the pure decision, the total exception, and the absolute discretion embodied in the ideal of radical indeterminacy: "the logical answer to the crisis of legal indeterminacy was a dictatorship, in which the unavoidability of arbitrary action was taken as granted" (p. 97). As Scheuermann has it, Schmitt's critique of liberalism is informed by his conclusion that the liberal rule of law hindered the full realization of legal indeterminacy, which, for Schmitt, was the expression of naked force and, in that sense, of the purest moment of the political (p. 32). Thus, Schmitt endorsed "a permanent dictatorship," "a radical decisionism," and a "militant antilegalism" as various institutional manifestations of his wholehearted approval of radical legal indeterminacy. Schmitt alledgedly struggled to replace normalcy with a constant state of exception and lawlessness, which does not differ much from legal nihilism (pp 32-35). Obviously, here Scheuerman reproduces, albeit in a more sophisticated form, the demonic depiction of Schmitt, shared by his main detractors, as an irrational, existential thinker, who was fascinated by violence and who glorified blind, charismatic decisionism as the essence of true politics. (pp. 248 and 251).[9]

Scheuerman's main thesis about the centrality of legal indeterminacy in Schmitt's work is both controversial and disputable. Although Schmitt embraced decisionism, and turned it against normativism, legal positivism, and formal jurisprudence, he was careful to distinguish his position from legal nihilism, which he opposed both implicitly and explicitly. For Schmitt, the decision is necessary only in those critical moments when the self-institution of society as a whole is at stake. This is what makes the decision a founding, creative and originating act, rather than, as Scheuerman implies, an arbitrary intervention in everyday politics on the part of a dictator. Any discussion of Schmitt's decisionism must be examined in relation to his concept of popular constituent power. For Schmitt, the total decision is always a founding decision, which is related to his understanding of extraordinary, constitutional politics. It does not describe everyday, normal law-making. Once the links between sovereignty, decision, and constituent

9. For an example of a biased, inaccurate, and distorted depiction of Schmitt as an irrational political existentialist, see Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt, Political Existentialism and the Total State," in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1990), pp. 389-416, and "Carl Schmitt, the Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1992), pp. 425-447. Even scholars highly critical of Schmitt have reached the exact opposite conclusion from that of Wolin and Scheuermann. For example, Dyzenhaus acknowledges not only that Schmitt dismissed power politics, but also that he sought to illuminate the underlying moral and intellectual reasons that might lead someone to annihilate one's enemy. In an intriguing comparison with Isaiah Berlin, Dyzenhaus demonstrates how Schmitt anticipated Berlin's argument that the politicization of higher moral principles and their use in political conflicts can generate totalitarian outcomes. The justification of one's cause by humanistic values de-humanizes the enemy, turns him into a foe, and paves the way for his total destruction. See David Dyzenhaus, "Putting the State Back in Credit," in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, *op cit.*, pp. 78-80.; and Jean-François Kervegan, "Carl Schmitt and 'World Unity'," in *ibid.*, pp. 59-62 and 68.

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power are established, the instituting decision must be a collective, sovereign act of constitution-making — not the arbitrary attribute of a person, least of all of a charismatic person. Decisionism is related to a theory of democratic legitimacy, rather than, as Scheuerman argues, to a theory of mass-dictatorship.[10] Time and again, Schmitt stresses that the concept of sovereignty refers "to a general concept in the theory of the state, and not merely to a construct applied to any emergency decree or state of siege."[11] Moreover, in a similar vein, he argues that the moment of the exception "is different from anarchy and chaos" in the sense that "order in the juridical sense still prevails even if it is not of the ordinary kind."[12]

On the other hand, Scheuerman also claims that Schmitt's affinities with National Socialism emerged from his project to establish a "postliberal form of legal determinacy," and to salvage some minimum and defensible form of formalism, predictability, and regularity (pp. 128-129, 132, 134-135, and 164). According to this second argument, Schmitt's critique of liberalism was predicated on the assumption that formal jurisprudence could not solve the problem of legal indeterminacy. Schmitt is portrayed now as a defender of legal determinacy, seeking to protect it from the internal weakness and historical anachronism of liberalism. His adherence to Nazism is explained now in terms of his overriding and central "task of constructing an alternative legal system capable of guaranteeing the determinacy allegedly missing from formalistic modes of liberal thought" (p. 115).

National Socialism appealed to Schmitt, not because of its dictatorial and unregulated, arbitrary executive power, but, rather, because of its supposed ability to reconceive a new, more viable form of legal regularity, based on ethnic homogeneity and racial unity. Here Scheuerman comes close to David Dyzenhaus' interpretation. Without using Scheuerman's interpretative framework, Dyzenhaus underscores Schmitt's quest for normalcy, security and order. While it has become commonplace to make the exception the central category of Schmitt's thought, Dyzenhaus suggests that Schmitt was equally concerned with how to contain the creative form-giving, constituent power of the sovereign will. He notes that, "while the vitality of the exception looms large as the theme of *Political Theology*, it is important to keep in mind that Schmitt was not arguing for the total negation of normality. Indeed, in other works of this period, he seemed to argue for the desirability of legally established normality. For he did not reject the idea of a society comprehensively governed by legal norms, on condition that the political decision that underpins that legal order is made explicit."[13] This coexistence of

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10. Carl Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre* [1928] (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1989), chp. 9.

11. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology. Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* [1922], trans. by George Schwab (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 5.

12. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, *op cit.*, p. 12.

13. David Dyzenhaus, *Legality and Legitimacy: Carl Schmitt, Hans Kelsen, Hermann Heller* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 46.

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two different interpretations ends with an obvious contradiction, which has major repercussions for Scheuerman's critical reading of Schmitt.

First, Scheuerman fails to distinguish clearly between the moment of the exception and the moment of normalcy. At times, they appear interchangeable. Thus, Schmitt seems to have endorsed a permanent situation of emergency, and, simultaneously, to have sought to restore a stable state of normalcy; he was an exponent both of legal nihilism and legal stability. Second, Scheuerman misses the important differences between the concepts of sovereignty, representation, delegation, and the two forms of dictatorship, which Schmitt sought to differentiate. He elides Schmitt's assertions that sovereignty can never be represented, that delegation is not a form of representation, and that sovereign dictatorship cannot embody the constituent power of the people.[14] By conflating all of these concepts into the plebiscitarian president, who is simultaneously the sovereign, the representative of the people, and the dictator, Scheuerman advances a questionable interpretation. Third, Scheuerman misses the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue with Schmitt's recovery of the notion of constituent power from the oblivion in which liberal constitutionalism had relergated it.[15] Such a dialogue could have benefited Schmitt scholarship as well as contemporary models of radical and substantive democracy in search of a new identity.

Given the hegemony of procedural theories of deliberative, liberal democracy, which tend to weaken and to domesticate the radical impulses contained in the idea of the sovereignty of the people, Schmitt's theory of the constituent power of the *demos* represents a starting point for rethinking the role of direct forms of popular participation within instituted politics.[16] By misconstruing the constituent sovereign as arbitrary violence, by presupposing ethnic homogeneity, and by emphasizing pure force, Scheuerman loses the element of democratic legitimation ingrained in Schmitt's constitutional theory. In fact, from the standpoint of legal theory, Schmitt's notion of the constituent power of the people is a powerful, if undeveloped reminder that the modern, secular, post-metaphysical constitutional and political order can draw its legitimacy only from the idea of popular constituent power as the self-determination of a political community.[17] Citizens always should be able to understand themselves as the authors and the creators of the fundamental laws of the land and as participants

14. See, e.g., Carl Schmitt, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* [1923], tr. and ann. by G. L. Ulmen (Westport: Greenwood, 1997) and Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, *op. cit.*, ch. 16.

15. For the importance of Schmitt for rediscovering the notion of the constituent power, see Olivier Beaud, *La puissance de l'État* (Paris: PUF, 1994), pp. 203-262 and Claude Klein, *Théorie et pratique du pouvoir constituant* (Paris: PUF, 1996), ch. V.

16. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and the Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 39-48.

17. Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, *op cit.*, chs. 8 and 9.

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in the instituting power of society.[18] The political community expresses itself directly on the basis of an explicit collective decision that marks the founding and originating moment of a democratic order.[19]

Schmitt rarely identified the people and constituent power with a pre-political substance, and there is not much in his writings to suggest that he thought that the ability of the people to act as a constituent sovereign was due to common ethnic origins.[20] On the contrary, on many different occasions and, consistent with his anti-foundationalist theory of identity formation, Schmitt relativized, historicized, and downgraded any direct reference to a pre-political essence as the intrinsic identity of the people. The political identity of the people, Schmitt wrote, "does not describe its own substance, but only the intensity of an association or dissociation of human beings, whose motives can be religious, national (in the ethnic or cultural sense), economic, or of another kind and can affect at different times different coalitions and separations."[21] Precisely because of his friend/enemy distinction, Schmitt did not essentialize and naturalize the constituent power of the sovereign people. This distinction was

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18. This line of inquiry has been examined and further developed in Antonio Negri, *Le Pouvoir constituant. Essai sur les alternatives de la modernité* (Paris: PUF, 1997).

19. See Andreas Kalyvas, "Carl Schmitt and the Three Moments of Democracy," in *Cardozo Law Review* (forthcoming in Vol. 21, Nos. 5-6 (May 2000). Also, see Andrew Arato, "Dilemmas Arising from the Power to Create Constitutions in Eastern Europe," in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 14, Nos. 3-4 (January 1993), pp. 661-690, and "Forms of Constitution Making and Theories of Democracy," in *Cardozo Law Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2(December 1995), pp. 191-231.

20. Scheuerman acknowledges the lack of textual evidence regarding the alleged ethnic definition of the constituent power of the people: "Although Schmitt leaves open the possibility that homogeneity may take distinct forms, I believe that textual evidence suggests that even the 1920s he considered national or ethnic homogeneity most likely to guarantee political unity." This requires a lot of belief, indeed! First, there is no such evidence anywhere before 1933. Schmitt's discussion in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy,* to which Scheuerman refers, is simply a description of Sorrel's concept of the myth. Rather than glorifying ethnic sameness, Schmitt describes it as a political myth, i.e., as an intellectual construct. This hardly qualifies as a nationalist approach. Given this lack of textual evidence, it is worth asking: was Schmitt a nationalist? Be that as it may, three points are relevant here: (1) As a Catholic, Schmitt must have felt uneasy with German identity and the memory of the *Kulturkampf.* (2) Contrary to today, in the beginning of the century nationalism constituted the central ideological discourse of the bourgeoisie and of liberalism. Is Scheuerman willing to go so far as to indict the entire German political establishment (from conservatives to liberals to socialists) as being crypto-Nazi because they were nationalists? (3) The definition of constituent power as the power of the nation was first expounded by Emanuel Sieyès. Was his theory also fascist? For a historical and conceptual survey of the notion of the *pouvoir constituant*, see Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenforde, *Die verfassungsggebende Gewalt des Volkes. Ein Grenzbegriff des Verfassungsrechts* (Frankfurt am Main: A. Metzner, 1986).

21. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* [1932], trans. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 38.

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formulated in order to demonstrate a relational and anti-essentialist dimension of political identities. For Schmitt, political conflicts constitute the central mechanism of identity formation. A group's substantive sense of "us" is constructed through a confrontation in which each term of the relation simultaneously consolidates and enforces the identity of the other. This theory contrasts starkly with essentialist and foundationalist explanations of group identity that fix, once and for all, the parameters and content of group particularity according to an objective position within a given system of structural determinations, such as ethnicity or race.[22]

Schmitt never conceived the political to be a mere stage upon which the natural and organic ethnic identities of groups are played out. In other words, he never posited ethnicity or race as the essence of identity. On the contrary, political identities and shared conceptions of the "us" are constituted through struggles, confrontations, and differential relations between and among groups. For Schmitt, political identities cannot be closed, self-referential essences, because the friend/enemy criterion is "not . . . an exhaustive definition or one indicative of substantial content."[23] They are relational and interactively dependent on a "constitutive outside," which is designed symbolically as the "negated other."[24] A formulation like this points outward — to the contingent and political processes of identity formation — rather than inward — to an essential collective characteristic beyond and external to the range of politics. Thus, it would have amounted to a flagrant contradiction for Schmitt to claim that some identities are always already pre-formed outside the conflictual realm of the political and that the constitution is simply an epiphenomenon of a deeper, more authentic ethnic identity. Schmitt never succumbed to this contradiction. In a central paragraph of his constitutional theory, Schmitt emphatically and explicitly declares that democratic identity is "a political notion and, as all true political notions, it refers to the possibility of a distinction. Political democracy cannot rest on the absence of a distinction among all men, but only on belonging to a particular community, and this belonging can be determined by very divergent factors — the idea of a common race, a common faith, a common destiny and tradition," and a common class.[25]

Thus, Schmitt never maintained that the constituent popular sovereign must be a homogeneous ethnic community. Instead, he argued that if the people want to play an active political role, as is presumed in a democratic regime, they must

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22. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe make similar points. See their *Hegemony and Social Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1987).

23. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, p. 26 (italics added).

24. *Ibid.*, p. 63. The notion of the "constitutive outside" was introduced by Henry Staten in *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 16-19.

25. Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, *op. cit.*, pp. 227, 233-234.

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forge a collective identity according to certain shared values and common principles that will enable them to emerge as a lucid and conscious actor with specific projects. Far from being a totalitarian or racial ideology, the belief that democracy requires popular unity and collective solidarity (i.e. the general will, the common good, and the public interest) is one of the oldest maxims in political thought. Moreover, it constitutes the starting point for elucidating the normative foundations of a democratic regime. When Schmitt was examining the principle of political identity in a democracy, he was not speaking about a "particular will" ready to exterminate its enemies (pp. 66-72). Rather, he was referring to "the essence of the democratic principle . . . namely, the assertion of an identity between the law and the people."[26] For such an identity to be possible, it is logical to expect that a minimum degree of collective identity should exist among the citizens of a political community, so that the idea of a common good or a general interest can make sense.

Although Schmitt was opposed to pluralistic models of democracy, which equate the process of constitution-making either with a pragmatic balance of particular interests or with an unattainable rational consensus among all involved parties in the form of a constitutional pact,[27] Scheuermann does not have much to say about the underlying reasons for this disagreement. Also, apart from some references to Schmitt's preoccupation with political stability, social order and the threat of multiple sovereignty, all of which are more or less pragmatic concerns, Scheuerman does not provide an in-depth analysis of the normative foundations of Schmitt's confrontation with pluralism. On what normative grounds did Schmitt criticize pluralistic models of democracy? One major reason was the legitimation deficit that a pluralistic model implies, especially when applied to the founding moment of constitutional creation.

Finally, Scheuerman overlooks the striking similarities between Schmitt's critique of liberal jurisprudence and Marxism.[28] In his effort to forestall any potential leftist appropriation of Schmitt,[29] he fails to comment on the important

26. Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* [1923], translated by Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1985), p. 26.

27. Schmitt, *Verfassungslehre*, *op cit.*, chp. 7.

28. For an interesting discussion of the relationship between Schmitt and Marx, see Jorge E. Dotti, "From Karl to Carl: Schmitt as a Reader of Marx," in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, *op cit.*, pp 92-117.

29. Elements of such an appropriation of Schmitt by the radical Left can be found, for example, in Johannes Agnoli's work, as well as in a volume of collected essays published in Italy that gathered the papers presented at a conference organized by the Gramsci Institute in Venice. See Johannes Agnoli, *Die Transformation der Demokratie und andere Schriften zur Kritik der Politik* [1967] (Freiburg: Çaira, 1990), and *La Politica oltre lo stato: Carl Schmitt* (Venice: Instituto Gramsci Veneto, Arsenale Cooperativa Editrice, 1981). For Schmitt's influence on some earlier thinkers of the Left, see Ellen Kennedy's controversial study, "Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School," in *Telos*, No. 71 (Spring 1987), pp. 37-66.

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affinities between these two critical discourses, both of which approach the liberal rule of law as a political tool used to mask — under a veil of neutrality, legality, and impartiality — the political interest of the bourgeoisie in its struggle to promote its power over that of its rivals.[30]

Given all these of problems stemming from Scheuermann's two incompatible arguments regarding Schmitt, one might ask what prevented him from preferring one over the other, and thus offering a more consistent and cogent interpretation. For this reviewer, the explanation lies in the credibility and plausibility of his central thesis about an uninterrupted and essential unity in Schmitt's thought. In order to demonstrate the inherent totalitarian and dictatorial elements of Schmitt's work, Scheuerman underplays any changes or modifications in a career that spaned seven decades. Thus, predictable *diachronic* differences in Schmitt's theory appear wrongly as *synchronic* positions. Scheuerman collapses Schmitt's move from a more or less radical decisionistic view, developed in the early 1920s, to a rather traditional conservative jurisprudential approach, in the 1930s, into one, unitary trajectory.[31] This compression cannot but result in a series of contradictions. Scheuerman sacrifices the interpretative complexity and richness of Schmitt's theoretical contributions on the altar of his fundamental objective to reduce them to a Nazi theory and to make them fit into a narrow and rigid exegetical framework.

Although Scheuerman begins his study with the self-proclaimed promise to avoid the usual mistake of caricaturing Schmitt, he nonetheless concludes with an extremely dismissive reading that undermines his many interesting insights concerning the vexing and complicated relation between Schmitt and modern law, thus failing to advance any understanding of Schmitt as a jurist and as a

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30. One can detect here a common suspicion, shared by Marxists and Schmitt, of liberal legalism and political moralism. See Paul Piccone and G.L. Ulmen, "Introduction to Carl Schmitt," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 3-14. For the similarities between Schmitt's critique of liberal jurisprudence and Marxism, see Autorenkollectiv, *Marxistisch-Leninistische allgemeine Theorie des Staates und des Rechts*, 4 Vols. (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974-1976); Christoph Butterwegge, *Probleme der marxistischen Staatsdiskussion* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1977); Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: New Left Books, 1978); Bernard Edelmann, *Ownership of the Image* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) and "The Legalization of the Working Class," in *Economy and Society*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1980), pp. 50-64.

31. For a detailed and more convincing discussion of the changes in Schmitt's work, see Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception*, *op cit.*, and Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Liberal Authoritarianism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998). Recently, Jean-François Kervégan has proposed a periodization of Schmitt's thought in three historical and thematic units that correspond to three different phases of his intellectual development: "At the heart of Schmitt's work there is a remarkable contrast between texts written before and after the Second World War (or National Socialism) — so much so that they can be gathered into two completely independent groups." Jean-François Kervégan, "Carl Schmitt and 'World Unity'," *op cit.*, p. 55.

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constitutional philospher, but also completely invalidates Scheuerman's claim of a more unprejudiced and dispationate approach. Despite its merits, Scheuerman's book represents an importation from Germany of debates that took place several decades ago.[32] This belated arrival contributes neither to the advancement of Schmitt studies in English nor to the selective and reconstructive appropriation of those elements of Schmitt's constitutional and legal thought that could enrich current debates on democratic politics and political theory.

Andreas Kalyvas

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32. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde has described the animating concern of this hermeneutical circle as that of Schmitt's "collaboration during the Third Reich. From this perspective, the focus was on the continuity of his work: was he an opponent of democracy from the very beginning, or was he a conformist opportunist who often changed position?" See Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenforde, "Carl Schmitt Revised," in *Telos* 109 (Fall 1996), p. 82. Elsewhere I have argued that Schmitt scholarship needs to move away from what may be called "the second interpretative circle," which remains trapped within sterile polemics focused on Nazism and which has led to this impasse. See Andreas Kalyvas, "Who's Afraid of Carl Schmitt?" in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 25, No. 5 (1999), pp. 87-125.

Reconsidering Freud

Frederick C. Crews, ed., *Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend* (New York: Viking Press, 1998), 301 pp., $24.95

In *Lovesick*, a 1983 film by Marshall Brickman about a Freudian analyst who comes to regard his work as useless, Dudley Moore falls in love and, in the modest give-and-take struggles of real life, quits his profession and confronts its "committee" of self-serving priestly elders. Sigmund Freud, played by Alec Guinness, is exonerated of any wrongdoing; his shade shows up at intervals to approve of the apostate's new life and to state that psychoanalysis was intended only as an "experiment," *never* as an "industry." At the time, few suspected that a deadly serious debunking of psychoanalysis had begun, and that the great man himself was the prime target.

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Revaluating Freud has become a major preoccupation for Frederick C. Crews, whose most influential book is, ironically, a work of Freudian criticism: *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (1966). In the years following its publication, Crews began to reconsider Freudian theory. When the book was reprinted in 1989, he wrote a new preface condemning psychoanalysis as a "pseudoscience," although he felt that there was still enough value in his readings to warrant a second edition. Thereafter, he published two long articles on the horrors of Recovered Memory Therapy (RMT), in which subjects were supposedly recalling incidents of childhood abuse years after the alleged fact. Some of these so-called recovered memories were used to support legal actions against hapless and unsuspecting parents and care-takers. Crews believed that the premises of RMT lay in Freudian analysis, with its purported ability to release repressed material from the unconscious for the relief of adult dysfunction, and he took it as a matter of personal responsibility to make amends for having supported what he had come to see as a dangerous fraud, "closer to animistic shamanism than to science." The two articles, along with a battery of critical responses, mostly from analysts, were published in a small book titled *The Memory Wars: Freud's Legacy in Dispute* (1995).

In 1996, when the Library of Congress planned an exhibit to present the traditionally reverent view of Freud and his work, it was challenged by people busy unravelling the legend. After much ado, the exhibit went on more or less as the traditionalists wanted, which convinced Crews that a book was needed to bring the case against Freud to the general reader. This is how *Unauthorized Freud* came into being. The book is divided into four sections. Crews provides a general introduction, an overview of each section, and a brief synopsis of each essay, for most of which he also has supplied the "irreverent" titles. Part 1, "Wrong From the Start," tells the "real" story of the founding of psychoanalysis, in contradistinction to the legend. Part II, "The Illusion of Rigor," exposes the flaws in Freud's methodology. Part III, mockingly titled "Psychic Inspector Clouseau," shows how all of Freud's major cases were failures. Part IV, "We Few," details how the psychoanalytic profession has managed to dodge scientific scrutiny.

The book argues that "psychoanalysis was built out of straw," that it was a "mistake that grew into an imposture," that the " great detective of the unconscious was incompetent from the outset," and that "he made matters steadily worse as he tried to repair one theoretical absurdity with another." Not all of the contributors share this sweeping dismissal of Freud. For Crews and some of the contributors, however, the case against Freud is not a matter of a correctible flaw in an otherwise viable framework; he argues that "the cloudy propositions themselves appeal to evidence from a calculatedly unexaminable realm, and a full correction of that flaw would simply make the body of doctrine disappear." Thus, in "Was Freud a Liar?" Frank Cioffi, argues that the founder of psychoanalysis actually elicited support for his budding theories from his patients, and deceived

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himself into thinking that he was gaining clinical proof. In Cioffi's reading, Freud created a virtually non-falsifiable, and, therefore, non-scientific theory, in which certain symptoms and emotions were alleged to signal infantile experiences, something which could never be proven or refuted definitively. In another entry in the book, "Claims Without Commitments," Cioffi shows the untrustworthiness of Freudian concepts, whereby "a sadistic super-ego" can arise both from having and not having "a harsh and punitive father."

Crews also undermines the fallback position of some of Freud's admirers, i.e., that the founder of psychoanalysis at least deserves credit for providing original insights into the human mind. According to the book, the existence of the unconscious was known from ancient times, dreams had always been understood to contain meaning, and sexual matters were being explored by other researchers at the turn of the century. Where Freud *is* original, Crews maintains, he is scientifically indefensible: the idea that certain physical symptoms are due to the suppression of primal traumas, the belief that "free association" can release the unconscious, the claim that one could find psychic clues in the "hidden" meaning of dreams, the "quaint" diagnoses for mental disturbances that he rendered in his famous cases, and his "wild" (if fascinating) explanations of history and prehistory. Thus, Freudian theories consist of nothing more than unproven assumptions, self-affirming postulates, and circular reasoning, abetted by "ignoble fibs and dodges." An example from each section should suffice: In Part I, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen ("Anna 0.: The First Tall Tale") details how Freud allowed the claim to stand that "Anna O," alias Bertha Pappenheim, had been cured of her symptoms through her "talking therapy" with Breuer, even after evidence emerged to the contrary. In Part II, Rosemarie Sand ("Manifestly Fallacious") attacks Freud's theory that dreams contain not overt but covert meanings, which have to be discovered by pulling apart pieces of the dream and by probing for the background thoughts that gave rise to them. Sand questions the assumption "that a series of thoughts which *follow* a dream" can lead to thoughts which *preceded* the dream. In Part III, Stanley Fish ("The Primal Scene of Persuasion") re-examines Freud's description of the famous "Wolf Man" case and shows that what Freud calls the "unimpeachable fact" undergirding his analysis is the assumption that a "primal scene" had taken place, for which there is no proof, but only conjecture based on Freud's own theories. In Part IV, Ernest Gellner ("Free Fall") questions Freud's concept of "transference," in which the analysand's attitude toward the analyst is supposed to embody the very psychic problems that must be worked through. Rather, Gellner argues, transference is a device that, conveniently for the therapist, gets the patient to co-operate in his own drawn-out therapy and to see any problems in the treatment as his own.

Crews and his doubters are aware that no single volume can refute so large and diffuse a body of work. However, since most of the selections are excerpted from longer studies, the book provides a road map to the revisionist enterprise in

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general. Particularly important are the selections that provide a fuller picture of the historical record, like "The Rhythm Method," by Frank Sulloway, which demonstrates the crucial overlap between the theories of Wilhelm Fliess, an early collaborator of Freud, and those of Freud himself, thereby diminishing the latter's originality. Also important are those that review the evidentiary record of Freud's famous cases, such as "A Little Child Shall Mislead Them," a reading of the case of "Little Hans," in which Joseph Wolpe and Stanley Rachman show how the child was asked leading questions arising from preconceived notions.

All in all, the collection raises serious questions. It is incredible that a movement as profoundly influential as psychoanalysis and that theories accepted as pervasively and deployed as widely as Freud's have been constructed so shakily. If Freud has been exposed as proving murder when there is no corpse, however, Crews & Co. might be seen to have *dis*proven murder when there is a corpse. As essay after essay dismantles essential building blocks of Freudian theory, exposing it as bereft of any concrete proof, or built on manipulation of facts, one still feels that a residue remains that cannot be wiped away when all the blocks are gone. Crews is both right and wrong when he argues that Freudian theory simply refutes common sense: "Ordinary experience does not teach us, for example, that benign-looking sentiments are always defenses against more primary hostile and/or libidinous ones; that the strength of a desire can be gauged by the severity of the social prohibition against it; that each peculiarity in someone's behavior must stem from a specific childhood ordeal; that a symptom must allude symbolically to the repressed trauma lying behind it; that a certain buried trauma must be relived in order for a neurosis to be vanquished or that every custom, every civic ideal, every work of art must be purchased with sums of irreplaceable libido that leave 'civilization' ever more erotically impoverished."

But if all claims to the sweeping, generalizing totality with which Crews has formulated each item on the above list are put aside, there may still be value in some of Freud's ideas: that civilization requires repression, that releasing instincts can be disruptive, that repressing them excessively can be life-denying, that there are different psychic and emotive patterns in men and women, that behavior is often driven by not entirely conscious motives, that buried thoughts occasionally break through in conversation, that childhood patterns tend to be re-enacted in adulthood, that there is a connection between the mind and the body, that some sexual habits are associated with immaturity and some with maturity, and that utopia, or perfect happiness, is not possible. No doubt, other people thought such things at different times, but Freud pulled them together into a compact set of ideas. Where he went overboard was in claiming that he could explain human behavior exhaustively on the basis of clinical evidence, could develop therapeutic application, and, for that matter, predict the future (as, e.g., in his argument that the "illusion" of religious belief would disappear as the ability to make psychic life completely rational destroyed any need for the non-rational).

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Another objection has to do with Crews's claim that psychoanalysis has led to recent horrors, like the Salem-like child abuse cases of recent years, as well as the aforementioned Recovered Memory Therapy. He particularly cites the "Little Hans" case as an illustration of how children can be made to say what adults want to hear. But why did it take decades before this kind of misuse of Freudian insight arose? Surely other factors are in play, such as the advance of a veritable industry of victimology, which made it urgent to accept the testimony of "survivors" no matter what, and of feminism, which advanced the idea that women, and, by extension, children, are the perennial victims of men and of the adult world in general. Freud's rather dour, almost tragic view of human nature, and his modest view of the possibilities for human happiness would be healthy antidotes to current therapeutic notions, which seem to present any bit of suffering as the fault of factors outside the self. So would his insistence on a level of sexual maturity and the need for deferred gratification in the conduct of life.

This leads to a final reservation, around the point of how Freud managed to become influential. Since, as Crews writes, "psychoanalysis did not make its way in the world either by curing sick patients or by demonstrating its scientific cogency," how did it gain credence in the first place? Gellner and others have argued that "psychoanalysis flowed into deep currents of our century's thought and mood, at least within those societies that were primed to spurn religion-based traditionalism." This sounds credible, but the idea that theories gain cogency for reasons beyond their merits applies to contemporary orthodoxies as well, which tend to reject arguments from nature, like those of Freud, in favor of the idea that the human personality is socially constructed. Thus, what feminism advocates today is just as counterintuitive as anything attributed to Freud, if not more so: that there are no significant differences between men and women, that the situation of women is simply the result of patriarchal oppression, that women are no more oriented to the care of the young than men, that women should be allowed in combat, etc. Scientific support for feminist ideas is also very thin. As Gellner says of psychoanalysis, so it seems with feminism: it suited a time, a place, and a mood. It offered people of a self-glorifying age a way out of the contingencies of life.

This is not to say that *Unautharized Freud* is simply motivated by contemporary resistance to arguments from nature. The book makes a strong case against psychoanalysis as a science. But perhaps a note of caution is in order here; while taking past purchases back to the intellectual store, one should be careful about present and future acquisitions.

Carol Iannone

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Margaret Mead in Samoa

Derek Freeman, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 217 pp.

In 1983, Harvard University Press published Derek Freeman's *Margaret Mead And Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth.* Many anthropologists judged the book to be an unwarranted attack on the late Margaret Mead for the field work she did in 1925-26 for *Coming of Age in Samoa,* published in 1928. The implications from this now famous book served as evidence for a general liberal view of culture in America, resonated with the work of John Dewey as it became popular in the 1920's, and established Mead as an intellectual icon until her death in 1978.

Freeman's first critique of Mead caused a furor, not only because it questioned her research conclusions, but also because it attempted to undermine the strong, causal environmentalism in anthropology since Mead's early field work. The defense of Mead invoked the difficulties anthropologists face in doing field work and argued that Mead had simply overstated the cogency of her data. Her supporters argued, as did she before she died, that later field work in Samoa could not, in principle, refute her conclusions from 1928. And no anthropological apologist for Mead even intimated that her notion of the almost complete role culture played for an individual might need revision in light of her slight overstatements about Samoan culture.

Freeman took up Mead full throttle in 1983, and most of the particulars of his criticism are reiterated in this book. His critique centered on Mead's description of the psychological ethos of the islanders in Manu'a Archipelago, the eastern section of American Samoa. Mead had described these Samoans as easy going, relatively uncommitted, possessed of great emotional equanimity and subjectively unstressed. Adolescent girls were found to be remarkably free from the pressure concerning hormones and sex that was too salient for Mead in her own Western culture. *Coming of Age in Samoa* carried appendices with a few tables of data on the girls who were the main focus of Mead's field work.

Freeman insisted that Mead's depiction of the Samoans and of Samoan adolescent female sexuality were dead wrong. From pedestrian data in public records, from documents in Samoa's history, from ordinary understanding of the Samoans and their language, and, most importantly, from one of Mead's own data tables, Freeman averred that Mead's conclusions were at odds with Samoan reality. Most of the 1983 book attempted to establish that other data painted a much more complicated picture of the Samoans, and that the serenic simplicity in Mead's description was simply false and, perhaps, demeaning to the Samoans.

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Analysis of the "causes" for Mead's error(s) is the main focus of the new book, and its very title reveals Freeman's reluctance to believe Mead constructed a deliberate misrepresentation or a even a fraud. At the end of his first book, Freeman had offered possible reasons for Mead's mistakes, and none of them were indicative of out-and-out fraud. He suggested that Mead's "discovery" of a trouble-free transition through puberty might have served her mentor Franz Boas in the fight against biological determinism. Freeman implied that Mead's minimally competent, unexceptional grasp of the Samoan language might have induced her to be duped by her Samoan informants. He also wondered if Mead had been working out a previously formed view of exotic, pleasure-bound Samoans from other, more romantic writings on South Seas' Islanders.

Freeman now insists that Mead did not commit deliberate fraud, because she left her notebooks, journals, letters, etc. for scrutiny by scholars, that she obviously believed her "errors" to be true. He offers his new book as the outcome of research begun in the late 1980s — after the shouting of 1983 had died down. Having accepted that Mead's research was objectively wrong, he moves on to the specifics of the nature of her errors, and he has been able to look at the notebooks, journals and letters to prepare his case. He concludes that Mead was indeed misled; in fact, she was "hoaxed" by two female informants in 1926.

One of the informants was interviewed in 1987 and again in 1993. A "key excerpt," published first in 1989, appears now in *Fateful Hoaxing.* The informants had told Mead that they were very active sexually with men even though they were not. The reason that they had lied is not clearly laid out, although the reader can surmise that the deception arose out of discomfort raised by sexual discussion and a culture-bound trickster response triggered by this specific discomfort. The confirmation that Mead was hoaxed seems to have impelled Freeman to embark on the present study. The hoaxing, evidently, had been a catalyst to Mead's biases and special interests, and had led to the errors Freeman originally pointed to in her Samoan work.

Freeman traces Mead's trip to American Samoa, including her stopover at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, her work while in Samoa, and her trip back to Europe after the research was completed. He tracks her as closely as the documents allow. The entire book reads a bit like a detective story, in which the narration attempts to etch out the developing contours of the "erroneous" mind-set Mead used to write her Samoan book. The sequence began with Mead's grant to study adolescent girls in Samoa. Her mentor and sponsor, Franz Boas, was keenly interested in the project, Freeman says, because he was looking for a "negative instance" to refute the notion that biological factors are more important than cultural influences in the socialization of adolescent girls. Hence, if Mead could provide a case in which culture, as a matter of course, clearly produced an effect different from what biology demanded, it would have been welcomed by both Boas and Mead.

Mead stopped over at Honolulu to spend time at the Bernice P. Bishop

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Museum, and she promised to carry out an ethnographic study of Samoan culture in general to be published later by the museum. In the first book, Freeman only suspected Mead was influenced by a movie-image version of the South Seas. Now, he stipulates that Mead was influenced directly by Dr. Edward Craighill Handy, a senior ethnologist at the museum. Handy presumably "talked-up" the Samoans as an idyllic, untroubled people, and Mead simply assimilated this romantic view.

Finally, on Samoa, after studying the language intensively for at least one month, Mead took some time to settle her living arrangements and to get the lay of the land. Freeman claims that the general ethnographic description of Samoan customs required by her commitment to the Bishop Museum was in serious conflict with the intensive demands of the study of adolescence dictated by the grant which was paying for the field trip. He argues that Mead became more interested in the ethnographic study, and that the record shows she spent most of her time in late 1925 and early 1926 cataloguing ethnographic detail. The material Freeman uses, mostly letters, indicates that Mead, by her own description, did not actually start the adolescence project until March 1926 and. even then, did or could do very little on it, since she left Samoa in the spring of 1926.

Freeman's reconstruction of Mead's time in Samoa puts Mead on an excursion with two informants in March 1926 with scant data relevant to adolescent girls, because she had not yet done her research, perhaps, in part, because of ambivalence about the two projects: loyalty to Boas' cultural view, and Handy's instructions to see the Samoans idyllically. She simply lighted upon the hoaxed material as strong evidence against incipient sexual urges as stress factors in adolescent girls. Mead believed her informants when they told her that Samoan girls were very active sexually, because she could use their reports as data for sexual ease during adolescence. That the informants themselves were not adolescent girls, but young women of Mead's own age, gives the story a slightly sinister tone, because it suggests Mead would have used anything construable as field data to buttress her conclusions.

Freeman argues that the situation was fraught with personal conflict for Mead, because the adolescent study held such promise for Boas and Mead around the culture-biology dichotomy. As is well known, in the 1920s and 1930s, America shifted its center of sensibility from a rank nativism to a strong environmentalism. This rise of the behaviorist movement and its easy marriage with education is consistent with the functional pragmatism and instrumentalism displayed in the FDR-led 1930s. In general, external conditions were seen to be much more causal and manipulable than internal factors. In the long run, Mead's judgment that Samoan adolescent girls were untroubled by puberty, or by any stressful pressure caused by discrepancies between natural urges and social restraint during adolescence, because Samoan culture did not foster these problems, became important data for the transformation into American environmentalism.

Overall, Freeman seems to show accurately that Mead's field work on

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adolescent girls was very spare and had little statistical frequency reliability. One of her letters to Boas indicates that she had wanted to present a picture of the Samoans, rather than to provide statistical data. *Coming of Age in Samoa* ultimately was published as a book of scenarios, exceedingly well-written, with a few, minimally informative tables as appendices.

There are few things awry in *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* besides the melodrama in the title. A loaded statement, a conclusion often, appears to be footnoted when it is not, because it appears at the end of a paragraph. Thus, important statements are often unreferenced. Many arguments do not stand much pressure, because the causal links necessary to show that Freeman's analysis is correct are not in the text. The most egregious example is whether or not Mead has data, and, if so, what do the data show. While Freeman asserts that Mead's data do not support her conclusions, he hardly demonstrates it well. He would have been well served in either of his books to have stated much more precisely that all of her available data show something other than what she concluded. Arguments about data can only take this form.

There are obvious problems with Mead's data. The tables in her book are very simple and have only some ethnographic descriptions. There is also a problem in the count of how many girls were interviewed that Freeman does not raise. Had Freeman characterized Mead's data better and more completely from other sources which did not appear in her book, i.e., the notebooks and journals she left, which he identifies, it would be easier to accept his argument about the discrepancy between fact and reality. He does not argue the point well, except to identify one fact in a table which might serve as evidence for a different conclusion. Much more is needed to demonstrate that the work is in complete error, hoaxed or not.

A closer look at Freeman's other arguments reveals that he does not develop a very solid causal bridgework. His chapter on Boas is a sophomoric intellectual history in which Boas is labelled, rather than analyzed, as a cultural determinist. The presentation is under-dimensioned and cannot be accurate as stated, given Boas' own interest in physical anthropology. Consequently, Freeman does not succeed in showing any specific influence by Boas to compel Mead to search for strong evidence in favor of cultural determinism in Samoa, even though Boas and Mead ultimately believed in the preponderant importance of culture. While it is always possible he is correct, Freeman does not make a sound case for Boas and Mead as the simple-minded, monolithic zealots he believes them to be.

In the chapter on Mead's stopover at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Freeman emphasizes that Mead had been given an inaccurate, almost Edenic picture of the Samoans by Dr. Handy. The Samoans, Freeman argues, registered in her mind as unconcerned, simple, conflict-free people, and the image served as fertile background for the hoaxing later. But, while Freeman provides some background to show that there were people at the museum who came into contact with a simplistic description of the Samoans, there is not a single shred of evidence that Handy

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told Mead anything of the kind; the whole case here is circumstantial.

Freeman insists that Mead did not falsify her case on Samoa. It was, allegedly, a matter of an unwitting playing-out of prejudices in a context of impoverished data and a constellation of circumstances, e.g., the hoaxing, conducive to an inaccurate picture. Ultimately, Mead believed in her own inaccuracies. Yet, Freeman provides a fair number of instances in the book, well documented, indicating direct lies by Mead: she lied in some of her letters to Boas; she stated in a later preface that a work was revised when it had not been (discussed in Freeman's first book). In fact, Freeman documents many instances in which Mead misrepresented the context in which she worked.

Thus, the question becomes one about how much field work on the adolescent problem Mead actually conducted and whether, as she claimed, she wrote up any fieldwork on the boat trip back to Europe in the spring of 1926. In these cases, Freeman presents strong evidence that Mead lied about these activities in certain ways. Given his uncovering of these untruths, Freeman was duty-bound to construct a deeper analysis of misrepresentation other than the assertion that Mead was led by blind prejudice. Her misrepresentations are a bit too strong to be offset by Freeman's claim that, because Mead believed her own lies, she cannot be accused of dishonesty. To claim that Mead did not *really* lie, despite cogent evidence for a pattern of misrepresentation, sounds like crying wolf.

If Freeman is correct about the erroneous nature of the anthropology, then Mead might well have been in an ambivalent relation with her own conclusions. Some of the lies seem to disguise her doing only a little fieldwork on the problem for which she had received her Samoan grant. Her recalcitrance to revise her conclusions over the years seems to have been personally protective as well, because she claimed that her Samoan observations could not be refuted except at the time they were made. Freeman's narrative does construct an inferential case for Mead's own psychology to have interfered in some of her conclusions, and such a case might support Mead's not having lied consciously. But he does not use this rich material to explain his claim that she did not lie deliberately. The result is massive evidence for lying, which is interpreted, without proper explanation, as unwitting.

Some psycho-history on Mead would have been welcome. At that time Mead's marriage was disintegrating. During her trip back to Europe, instead of writing up her work, as she had indicated in one letter, she was in liaison with Reo Fortune, who became her second husband, as she indicated in another letter. Because her work revolved around female sexual activity, it is easy to see a more subtle personal influence here on the manner in which she depicts female sexuality. Her overdrawn depiction of Samoan girls could be construed as her own flight from guilt. The last point is significant, because there is an important element about virginity in the anthropology of Samoan adolescent girls. Mead minimized clear evidence that virginity was highly valued. If so, then there should be

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psychological conflict lurking in the psyches of the adolescent girls who, according to Mead, were blissfully promiscuous. Mead herself was made an honorary virgin, a *taupou*, in three different villages, even though she was married (she allowed the Samoans to think she was unmarried). But Freeman does not take even a small step to an analysis which would put together Mead's own psychology and her patchy observations to explain why her "lies" were unwitting.

What might have been a reasonable conclusion for Freeman is that the Samoan adolescents themselves felt the same guilty ambivalence and were in a kind of internal war between the ideal of virginity and the desire for sexual activity. Here he could have claimed conflict at a deeper, conventionally unstated level, and argued that Mead should have looked for different, more probing data. Freeman would have been forced to criticize her work differently and to argue in more detail about the work itself. Instead, by disavowing without proper explanation that her misrepresentations are deliberate lies, he smuggles in a sense of Mead as a chronic dissembler.

Most Mead apologists agree that her characterizations of the Samoans and of the adolescent girls were overdrawn. They argue that her work had been gradually modified and corrected over the years. She had not been dishonest, but a bit selective. She was not entirely wrong. But Freeman's *Fateful Hoaxing* raises serious problems about the nature of Mead's work in 1925-1926. If Mead just oversimplified, then she turned existential statements into universals, and, in this sense, her work was fraudulent.

The particular way Mead depicted Samoan adolescent girls did resonate with her general cultural view, as is clear from the rewritten prefaces to *Coming of Age in Samoa*. Over and over, Mead claimed that the storm and stress felt during adolescence was not biologically necessary, but culturally transmitted, and her fieldwork served as strong evidence — her American culture should enlighten itself and refrain from making adolescence difficult. Of course, millions of educated Americans have read this book in a context of very high regard.

Freeman himself is influenced by a bio-social interactionism, which causes him to rankle at any unilateral simplification, however true. The bias appears in both books and is stated very primitively, without examples. He describes how he might argue any important anthropological or social question, including the puberty questions Mead faced, from this point of view. In these days of social constructionism as totalizing description of human experience, a postmodern behaviorism in reality, Freeman's claims about Mead's Samoan work and her very influential ideology should be investigated and argued more fully to provide a complexity better suited to leaven the effect of monolithic cultural causality.

Martin J. Kelly, Jr.

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Keeping Modern Man in Mind

Pierre Manent, *The City of Man*, tr. by Marc A. LePain, with a Foreword by Jean Bethke Elshtain (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 225pp.+ xi, $24.95.

It is now a commonplace that premodern reflection, whether mythical, philosophical, or theological, was terminally "anthropomorphic," given to the erroneous supposition that the human shape offers genuine insight into the shape of everything else.[1] It is also commonly assumed that modern philosophy distinguishes itself from its precursors by placing the human being at the center of its concerns. Thus Kant, for example, claimed that the question "what is man?" recapitulates the whole of systematic philosophical inquiry.[2] First impressions notwithstanding, these two convictions are not really at odds. For it is precisely through their "turn to the subject" that modern thinkers sought to liberate mankind from anthropomorphic confusion.[3] Premodern reflection, they alleged, unwittingly "projects" its humanity onto the world; having so misplaced itself, it invariably stumbles on badly distorted self-images wherever it happens to look. From the start, modern philosophy insisted on the necessity of proceeding self-consciously or "critically." On that basis, it promised to overcome all forms of "alienation."[4] In Kant's terms, whereas premodern thought is embodied in the "artisan of reason" who settles for emptily "speculative knowledge," philosophy as "system" adopts the stance of "the legislator of reason." By dispensing with all

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1. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., identifies George Henry Lewes, the English naturalist and long-time lover of George Eliot (1817-78), as perhaps the first to use the word "anthropomorphism" in its current sense. The assessment of the past connoted by the term is, however, prominent already at the beginning of the 17th century. See, e.g., Bacon's *Novum organum* and its celebrated doctrine of the idols.

2. See his *Lectures on Logic*, tr. and ed. by J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), "Introduction," §3, p. 538: "The field of philosophy in the cosmopolitan sense can be brought down to the following questions: (1) *What can I know?* (2) *What ought I to do?* (3) *What may I hope?* (4) *What is man?*" [Italics in the original]. He goes on to observe that the first three, which correspond to "metaphysics," "morals," and "religion," all refer to "anthropology," which makes the last thematic.

3. Insofar as this turn presupposed an isolated or "Cartesian" subject, modernity is obviously vulnerable to the criticism of those who, like Habermas, call attention to the linguistic and intersubjective terms of human existence. All the same, such critics have not repudiated, but merely sought to correct the modern attempt at self-determination.

4. It goes without saying that this term of art covers a multitude of sins. What "alienation" signifies for Hegel, for example, is not what it will mean for Feuerbach or Marx or Freud. One may, nevertheless, speak of a family resemblance.

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anthropomorphic specters, critical reason would enable mankind to thrive in a world of its own rational construction.[5]

The common conceit about premodern anthropomorphism is misbegotten. Both Biblical faith and Socratic philosophy constantly call human life into question.[6] This is not to say that they address "Kant's" question in the same way, much less that they come to the same conclusions. Indeed, even from within their distinctive perspectives, considerable differences have emerged about such matters: hence the variety of philosophical schools deriving from Socrates, and the tensions between the "old testament" and the "new" (to say nothing of ecclesiastical divisions among the followers of Christ). Nevertheless, Socrates may be said to agree with the Bible that the answer to the question of what man is cannot be reduced to contingencies of time or place, and that it is meaningful to wonder about Jew and Greek, slave and free, ancient and modern, or in short, about the human being as such. To that extent at least, Biblical faith and Socratic reason both lend support to the notion of an abiding human nature, a common core that sustains, but also takes the measure of the endless differences between us. They thereby concur that, if the human being is inclined to wonder about himself, this is because he does not altogether possess his own measure: man's humanity is both something given and something he must strive to realize. Accordingly, both "Jew" and "Greek" are paradoxically as one in supposing that a truly human life is a life lived in pursuit of its truth, or that he who would save his life must lose it.

While Pierre Manent is convinced that the moderns continue to have much to learn from Socrates and the Bible alike, his more immediate concern in *The City of Man* is to show that modernity does not in fact pursue the question "what is man?" with any real vigor. A sign of this, he suggests, is modern philosophy's abandonment of a vocabulary for human affairs that had been common to everyday speech, classical philosophy, and Biblical faith, in favor of such artful abstractions as "self-consciousness," "mind," "the will to power," "*pour soi*," "*Dasein*" and so forth (pp. 5–6).[7] He goes on to demonstrate that the neglect of the question of human nature evident in such talk is not a recent development. Indeed, *The City of*

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5. *Logic*, §3, p. 537. See also Francis Slade "Was ist Aufklärung? Notes on Maritain, Rorty, and Bloom, with Thanks but no Apologies to Immanuel Kant," in *The Common Things: Essays on Thomism and Education*, ed. Daniel McInerny (Washington, D.C.: American Maritain Association, 1999), pp. 48-68; and the same author's review of Carl Schmitt, *Catholicism and Political Form*, "Catholicism as a Paradigm of the Political?" *Telos* 109 (Fall 1996), pp. 113-22.

6. See, e.g., *Psalm* 8.3-8; *Hebrews* 2.8; Plato, *Theaetetus*, 174a-c; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b20-1098a15. "Anthopomorphism" originally identified a Christian heresy. See Augustine, *De haeresibus*, c. 60.

7. The "Introduction" is a condensed version of the French original, although the translation does not note the fact. Less easy to overlook are the many minor mistranslations and omissions, whose cumulative effect is to compromise the utility of the English version. The addition of a selective "Index" is a modest improvement over the original.

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Man argues that modernity begins to turn away from the question highlighted by Kant very early on; it also claims that this turn occurred not through benign neglect or the oblivion of Being, but deliberately, as a matter of philosophical policy, so to speak. Manent's purpose, however, is not simply to set the record straight. Rather, he means to "deconstruct" the modern concept of human affairs from within, and, in this way, to propose a renewed consideration of both the Greek and the Biblical attempts to address the question Kant had recycled. Given the appalling legacy of man's inhumanity to man over the past several centuries, his intention is obviously not exclusively speculative: how one treats one's fellow human beings has everything to do with what one takes them to be.

Why, though, should an examination of modern philosophy help in raising anew "the problem of human nature?" As Manent observes, the substantive "man" has ceased to have much meaning independently of the adjective "modern." Whatever respect or even nostalgia there may be for previous generations and their accomplishments, they are invariably considered "naïve." Such a judgment reflects in turn an embrace of "history" as the ultimate horizon of life. "Modern" derives from a word of late medieval provenance meaning "new"; modern man is, therefore, man on the go, man who is forever putting distance between what he was and what he is becoming (pp. 5-6). Yet "history" conceived as the process of human self-transformation is no simple datum of experience. After all, men have not always regarded their forbears as their inferiors, or the past as the childhood of mankind. Modern men tend simply to assume that their humanity is historically determined; their modernity is an article of faith. In order to subject the belief in history's transmogrifying power to rational scrutiny, it would therefore be useful to consider its emergence and growth. As Manent observes, the change in self-awareness manifest in modern historical self-consciousness first comes to sight in the modern philosophers' writings. If access to the phenomenon of man as such has been complicated by man's self-discovery as modern, this is largely because modern philosophy has eliminated the theoretical innocence that once characterized pre-philosophical life. Consequently, *The City of Man* proposes an "archeological" investigation of modernity, which in modern philosophy explicitly involves a rejection of the double heritage of Greece and Judaism (pp. 11, 175-76).[8] That is not to say, however, that Manent means to replace modern theorizing about humanity with a theory of a more traditional sort, as though there were no access to human life apart from some theoretical construction. He insists that close scrutiny of what modern philosophers have

8. See also his "De la causalité historique," in *Commentaire* 67 (Fall, 1994), pp. 705-14. This essay is a response to two essay-length reviews of the French original, by a historian of Leninism, Alain Besançon, and Philippe Raynaud, a neo-Kantian: "Que signifie être moderne?" *Commentaire* 66 (Summer, 1994), pp. 419–24; and "De la nature à l'homme," *op. cit.*, pp. 425-34. A partial translation of Manent's reply is available in *Modern Liberty and its Discontents*, a collection of his essays ed. and tr. by Daniel J. Mahoney and Paul Seaton (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), pp. 209-14.

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said man is, or rather, should become, cannot be avoided if one is to see what modern man conceives himself to be. Yet, he also clearly defers to his reader's judgment, rather than to the philosophers' texts as the ultimate measure of his analysis (pp. 8–9). Such deference is reasonable, of course, only if modern man remains, despite considerable dependence on philosophical modernity, still more human than modern. Were the converse true, all discussion of whatever sort would be condemned to the historicist's solipsism.

Manent attempts only a partial sounding of modern thought regarding matters relevant to his theme. For instance, he does not expressly consider "post-modernity" in any of its forms, even though it amply supports his thesis by making its neglect of human nature a noisy boast.[9] Nor does he need to, for his own deconstruction indicates that post-modern temporizing about human nature is anticipated already in the early modern period, and for reasons whose seriousness makes a mockery of post-modernist mocking.[10] Manent also says very little about the impact of modern natural science on human experience, although he does point in the direction one might go in pursuit of a "genetic" understanding of science.[11] His own focus is modern political philosophy, whose chronology he has charted elsewhere in more detail.[12] Instead of a full-blown "history," the

9. Foucault's dismissal of the anthropological question is typical: "To all those who still wish to talk about man, . . . to all those who still ask themselves questions about what man is in his essence, . . . we can answer only with a philosophical laugh — which means, to a certain extent, a silent one." Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), pp. 342-43.

10. Among the most comical turns of *The City and Man* is its exposure of the debt French existentialism unwittingly owes to the English "psychology" it holds in such disdain (pp. 135, and 153-54).

11. See pp. 138, together with 113, 128, 171-73, and 176. It is not clear, however, whether modern science can be adequately understood in "genetic" terms; and, in any case, the hold the physical sciences exercise on modern man's self-understanding is so extensive that, absent a prolonged reflection on this issue, Manent's summary account of modernity must be considered hypothetical. Quite another sort of lacuna in his argument concerns the role strictly non-philosophical factors played in the emergence and growth of modernity, such as the Protestant Reformation, for example, or the discovery of the new world. Manent adverts to the importance of the Reformation in the establishment of modern political life in *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, tr. by Rebecca Balinski (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 20-22. In defense of his emphasis on political philosophy one might observe that in matters intellectual, at least, silence need not imply exclusion. Moreover, and as he elsewhere observes, the cause or causes for the genesis of a thing are distinct from its conditions: see "De la causalité historique," *op. cit.*, pp. 708-710.

12. His other books include *Naissance de la politique moderne: Machiavel, Hobbes, Rousseau* (Paris: Payot, 1977), *Histoire intellectuelle du libéralisme: Dix leçons* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1987) [*An Intellectual History of Liberalism*], and *Tocqueville et la nature de la démocratie*, 2d ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1993) [*Tocqueville and the Nature of Democracy*, trans. John Waggoner (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996)]. In addition, he has edited *Les Libéraux* (Paris: Hachette, 1986). Daniel Mahoney's "Introduction" to *Modern Liberty and its Discontents* provides a good overview of Manent's work.

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present work offers what could be called a series of "case studies." In Part One, "The Self-Consciousness of Modern Man," Montesquieu is called as witness to "the authority" of the modern concept of "history," Durkheim and Weber are selected to represent "the sociological viewpoint," and Adam Smith is given an opportunity to defend "the economic system."

Manent uses Montesquieu to display the link, rarely noticed, between the modern deference to history as the ultimate horizon of human life and the characteristically modern concept of politics, instituted well before Montesquieu, and now regnant almost everywhere. According to Montesquieu, the modern regime replaces ancient and medieval notions of virtue as measures of the political order with a presumably more stable principle, i.e., the human quest to avoid evils of the most common or indisputable sort. This quest is legitimated by a doctrine of "rights" in the modern sense. The possession and exercise of such rights is not contingent on character; they do not much involve the obligations required by the goods that virtue means to serve, but concern rather the demands that can be made on everything and everyone else, whatever one's disposition toward to the good. Living "after virtue" has doubtless given rise to a certain wistfulness for the old regime, but as the aristocratic Montesquieu knew well, virtue is difficult to achieve, and so may be pursued only by putting oneself and others at some risk. In any case, he describes the new order as though it were an accomplished political fact; half a century later, the French Revolution made it visible for all to see; and virtue has had little political relevance ever since. But, as Manent goes on to observe, liberation from virtue's stern demands quickly gave rise to "history" as a substitute for the presumptive authority of human excellence. For whatever the cogency of the common or ordinary drives justifying the modern regime and its rights, nature alone had not assured its actualization, as is evident from the fact that men in the past had known nothing of government of, by and for "the people." Moreover, there did not seem to be a notion of "nature" both broad and coherent enough to accommodate both the virtuous pursuit of natural human perfection and the earnest avoidance of everyday evils. Together, these considerations could easily seem to entail the defeat of "nature" in any sense as a standard of political life. But with the marginalization of both virtue and nature, to what could one appeal as proof of the superiority of the modern embrace of universal human rights over the ancient preference for rare human excellence? Manent proposes that the aggressive novelty of modernity obviously favors the "authority of history" as judge of humanity (pp. 35, 37-42 and 44-49). The trouble is, once virtue or the good ceases to be the measure of human life, it becomes progressively more difficult to see what human reason can do other than to defer, with reverence or resignation it matters not, to the march of time.

"Society" may be considered the stage on which the struggles of "history" play themselves out. The "sociological viewpoint" is adopted by the likes of Durkheim and Weber in order to establish the necessities governing its performance. Like

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all modern claimants to the mantle of science, sociology conceives of its necessities in terms of social "laws" analogous to the still more analogous "laws" of modern physics (neither bears any necessary relation to such essential correlates of law in its primary signification as a legislator or a common good). Given that the sociologist's perspective is extrinsic to ordinary human experience, whatever cause he appeals to in order to account for human "behavior" must seem arbitrary or inhuman to the "subjects" he studies, especially because the concept of society as such was assumed from the start, and because anything like a teleological concept of nature had been ruled out in advance (pp. 66-67, 76 with, e.g., 79, 113-15). Through the invention of "values," Weber attempted to introduce a more human perspective to the sociological "viewpoint." But, as Manent notes, "values" eviscerate the very reality they mean to secure: detached from any inquiry into their truth, they are at odds with the conviction common to ancient politics, Socratic philosophy, and Biblical theology, that there are "objectively" better and worse ways to live one's life (pp. 72-73).

History and sociology may presume to sit in final judgement over modern man, but in an age of "day-traders," what really seems to matter is "the bottom line." It would appear entirely consistent with Adam Smith's mercantile intentions that in the rush to turn a profit, one deems it useless to "spend" time wondering about human nature. Yet, as Manent makes plain, Smith does commit himself to such speculation, concluding that "the desire to better one's condition" is what most defines the human species (p. 86). Smith's concept of "self-improvement" hardly heralds a return to virtue, however. *Homo oeconomicus* is "the thinnest of all beings" (pp. 88 and 144-45). His "economic system" teaches men to realize themselves by progressively reducing themselves to the terms of the marketplace. One might wish to argue on behalf of this arrangement that the modern economy has come close to abolishing slavery. Who, nowadays, would dare to deny that even the meanest paid "workers" are working for themselves? Even so, the atomizing of modern economic activity can hardly be said to have humanized relations among people in all respects; still less has it promoted a flourishing of the most noble human possibilities. In its bid to be all-embracing or "systematic," the modern economy encourages an ever more grim pursuit of material gain, yoked to an embrace of work itself as an exercise in "self-fulfillment" (pp. 107-8).[13]

Although Manent expresses grave reservations about modern "self-consciousness," his book is by no means a traditionalist-minded diatribe against modernity. *The City of Man* is animated by perplexity, not indignation. Thus, this

13. Manent is no proponent of "socialism," for it, too, treats men as "workers"; moreover, it calcifies the very economic order whose vitality it presupposes (p. 107). On the other hand, if Marx proved to be on the losing side of history, this may have been partly because he was "the most naturally Aristotelian of modern philosophers," having "understood better than others the upheaval implied in the privitization" of human existence by the modern economy (p. 178).

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exploration of the problems haunting modern self-understanding is more than just a prolegomenon to the renewal of an ancient question; Manent's critique of modernity itself proves to be an expression of that question. For, as the author is well aware, whatever difficulties may attend modernity, the effective eclipse of pre-modern man would seem to constitute an unimpeachable argument in its favor. No one seems able to break entirely free from the claims of "history."[14] *The City of Man* therefore seeks to discern what it is about the human being that has enabled modern man to come about. Or, to use a Machiavellian term in a decidedly unMachiavellian sense, Manent desires to know the "effectual truth" of modernity.[15] Is modernity self-vindicating? Is its generation of a distinctively modern humanity ultimately a refutation of the Socratic and Biblical understandings of humanity? Or do these two ancient traditions independently or jointly allow for or comprehend the possibility of *homo modernus*, and thereby foresee its contradictions, thus proving their superiority in truth (see pp. 46 and 182-206)?

This question provides the fulcrum for Part Two, "The Self-Affirmation of Modern Man," where Manent closely scrutinizes the philosophical foundations of modern self-awareness (p. 112). How is it, he wonders, that modern philosophy ceased to ponder what makes man fully what he is? That this most human of human questions should now, as in the past, often be overshadowed by everyday cares is, so to speak, perfectly human. But how could modern philosophers have abandoned this question and yet remained true to themselves? What is it about modern man that modern philosophy refuses to keep human nature in mind?

The ordering of the book's two parts points to the nerve of Manent's argument, i.e., that modern philosophy intends modern "self-consciousness" to be the result of, not the condition for modern "self-affirmation." This a striking claim. Human beings often assert themselves unthinkingly, and it is no secret that a habit of impulsive self-assertion will generate a distorted "self-image." What is distinctive about Manent's analysis is the claim that modern philosophy actually endorses such behavior: "Man's self-affirmation starts with his animal functions. In them and through them, the Moderns affirm this affirmation."[16] By affirming philosophically what had seemed quite firm enough on its own, modern philosophy's high-minded concern to solidify what is "low but solid" in human nature must therefore intend to obscure the equally natural inclination to seek some measure of self-understanding in order to direct or govern human self-assertiveness (p. 73). Paradoxically, for Manent, the very suppression of self-awareness constitutes

14. As he observes: "One could say that modern men have a knowledge of human nature that is invincible to any form of historicism and that we have an experience of history that is invincible to any antihistoricism."See *Modern Liberty . . ., op. cit.*, p. 42.

15. Compare *The Prince*, chapter 15. On Manent's leading question, see also his "De la causalité historique," p. 714 and 708-709.

16. In French as in English, the Latin root of the operative term means "to make firm." Unaccountably, the translation drops the second sentence of the passage cited here; compare p. 129 with *La cité de l'homme*, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

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the decisively philosophic character of modern self-consciousness. He concludes that modern philosophy teaches man to discover himself by constructing himself, i.e., to strive always to be all that he can be by perpetually fleeing all that he is and was given to be (pp. 135, 154). The three chapters of Part Two are therefore entitled "The Hidden Man" (or better, perhaps, "Man Cached Away"), "The Triumph of the Will," and "The End of Nature."

Ancient philosophy appears sparingly in Part One. In Part Two, the ancients are more prominent, chiefly as represented by Aristotle. Manent sets the modern philosophic suspension of the question of human nature within the context of early modern opposition to Aristotle's doctrine of substance — a doctrine that governed European intellectual life well into the 17th century. The modern "self" is the political embodiment of this opposition (p. 113). The focus of chapter four is Locke's radicalization of the Hobbesian doctrine of "power." Whereas for Hobbes, power formalizes the restless quest for satisfaction in the absence of any *summum bonum* (114-15, 130-31), Locke goes so far as to consecrate power as the dominant principle of human understanding. In this way, he would accord human beings mastery not only over the "almost worthless materials" of the subhuman world, but even over their own moral concepts, which he describes with amazing candor as "arbitrary" (pp. 115-18). He thereby completes the Hobbesian notion of "sovereignty," which is as much anthropological as it is political: "For Locke, the Sovereign is not this particular man but man himself, and he is not the sovereign of this particular country but of the human world as such" (pp. 119; and see 148-50).[17] But why should Locke foster so indefinite a concept of the human being as to render pointless all interest in political science, much less political philosophy (p. 122)? The nub of Manent's answer, which, although not new with him, is restated in a rather novel way, is as follows. Modern philosophy brackets the question as to what is proper to man, what man's "end" might be, because it "despairs that men will ever agree" about such matters. Worse still, the variously futile attempts men have made to explain themselves to themselves had the manifestly undesirable effect of oppressing others, as each doctrine sought to correct all others. It seemed, therefore, that the abandonment of the Aristotelian pursuit of truth about the human substance would liberate men from such "self-incurred immaturity." This putative liberation was to occur in three main domains: man would be freed to fashion moral notions (hence, the modern primacy of "culture"), to work for himself (hence the modern economy) and to enjoy his uniqueness or distinctiveness in the possession of "rights" (hence, modern political life) (pp. 128-30, 134-35, 138, and 179).

Manent draws out some of the tensions that obtain between these three

17. Modern sovereignty teaches every man to assert "l'homme, c'est moi!" Here Manent draws out the extra-political consequences of a doctrine he has treated extensively in earlier works. See also Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.'s *Taming the Prince: The Ambivalence of Modern Executive Power* (N.Y.: The Free Press, 1989).

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expressions of modern freedom (pp. 136–55). He also shows that once man is defined entirely by freedom so conceived, he is subject to a new kind of constraint. Once willing ceases to be guided by a naturally predetermined end governing the range and ultimate purpose of choices, it is "free" in the sense that it is entirely unmotivated; but for that same reason, "free-will" is an illusion, and is acknowledged as such by all philosophers (pp. 156-58). From this it is a short step to Emerson's grim conclusion, "Things are in the saddle/ And ride mankind." Manent hereby returns to the necessities of "history," which he now profiles against Aristotle's account of man's free realization within the political order. The dialogue Manent initiates between the enactment of modern freedom in history, and freedom as it exists in Greek, but also in medieval political life, carries on into the book's closing chapter. There Kant moves to center stage, in order to rescue modern will from the incoherence Manent had outlined in the preceding two chapters.

As indicated earlier, Kant identifies perfect self-assertion, willing unconditioned from above or below by nature or the good, with rational self-awareness. In law and respect for law, reason and freedom are said to coalesce in the overcoming of all "heteronomy." But, as Manent observes, "because freedom, and with it the law, are radically separated from nature, it is hard to conceive what power nature could exercise over liberty and law that would prevent man from obeying them regularly and perfectly." Rational autonomy ought to be a sure bet. Were Kant therefore to concede that there is something unnatural, or even supernatural, ultimately impeding the law's self-realization — "radical evil," say — then either the rational self-transparency of the law is ultimately compromised beyond recovery, or the law's sublimity compels the adoption of an otherworldliness surpassing anything to be found in "Platonism" or "Platonizing" distortions of Christianity (pp. 190-95).[18] On the basis of this analysis, Manent makes his most definitive statements about the drama of modern humanism.

Beginning with Hobbes' doctrine of power or even earlier, philosophic modernity fashions a response to the indeterminacy of human nature and its correlative good. But would not every premodern thinker of any stature allow that

18. Both are obviously to be distinguished from the Plato who wrote the Platonic dialogues and taught Aristotle. For a similar criticism of Kant, see Francis Slade, "Was ist Aufklärng?" *op. cit.*, pp. 58: "Enlightenment is *Kritik*, reason ruling over itself, giving itself the rules. *Kritik* is Kant's word, but what it names is not peculiarly Kantian. *Kritik* names what modern philosophy is . . . . *Kritik* means reason as the act of self-appropriation, *the act of establishing itself as reason.* The fundamental character of reason is not the *nous* of *theoria.* It does not mean self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects. Reason creates itself as reason in ruling over itself because mind is not naturally, or spontaneously, given to itself in this mode." Also, p. 59–60: "Reason as rule arises out of a condition understood to be indetermination. This suggests that the autonomy of Enlightenment reason presupposes a freedom of sheer spontaneity, and that reason as *Kritik* is groundless. This is the point at which what is called 'postmodernity' kicks in." For a criticism of Manent's reading of Kant, and his reply, see Raynaud, "De la nature à l'homme," *op. cit.*, pp. 427-30, and Manent, "La causalité historique," *op. cit.*, pp. 708-11.

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man's nature does not lie cut and dried before us? Certainly the two dominant premodern traditions, derived from Socrates and the Bible, found nothing scandalous in the fact that man must seek out what he is and should become. On the contrary, they agreed that, lacking the invariant guidance of an animal instinct, man comes into his own only when he is willing to cast his own into question. Greek philosophy and Christian theology are as one in holding that human nature is realized only when man understands that there is a considerable distance between his "self" and his nature. Indeed, for both premodern perspectives, the indeterminacy of the human good follows necessarily from its being so rich with promise; human nature escapes strict definition, but by excess, not defect (pp. 159, 166, 174, and 198).[19] But if that is the case, what was all the fuss was about? Simply put, Aristotle's account of the good was, for all its wealth, not wealthy enough. The historical claim advanced by *The City of Man* is, again, not entirely original (although this can hardly count against a book that means to question the conceit that "the new" replaces both "the good" and "the true" as a transcendental category of being). Manent holds that, in Christianity, Greek philosophy met its match. The answer to the question "what is man?" proposed by the Christian Church appeared every bit as powerful as that offered by Greek philosophy. But, by the same token, it was at odds with the Greeks in important respects. For over a millennia, neither one nor the other would prevail for long. And while there were various attempts at a reconciliation, none ever managed to settle the question to the satisfaction of all concerned. It is the seemingly insurmountable character of the quarrel between faith and reason that led modernity to conclude that the human good was, like Bottom's dream, without a bottom (pp. 24-29, 31-34, 44, 84-85, 122, 131-32, 170, and 198).

Despite this stand-off, and notwithstanding the nobility of his desire to liberate human beings from the heteronomous demands of Greek "nature" and Christian "supernature," Kant's attempt to answer the question appears to make his very posing of it unintelligible. For if human reason, in its proper modality, is self-legislating, then perplexity about oneself does not conform to reason's proper terms. "Heteronomy" is "self-incurred"; it is the consequence of our "laziness" and "cowardice"; it cannot therefore be an expression of human reason rightly understood.[20] Real perplexity, however, is nothing if not heteronomous; it is something one incurs; yet, it arises precisely when one begins to "think for

19. On this point, "post-modernism" appears to draw close to premodern thought, although, as Catherine Pickstock has argued, post-modernism confuses the presence of such excess with the defect of unmitigated absence. See her "Plato Deconstruction of Derrida," in *Telos* 107 (Spring 1996), pp. 9-44, and the elaboration of that text and its themes in *After Writing: on the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). See also her "Postmodern Theology?" in *Telos* 110 (Winter 1998), pp. 167-79.

20. "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" in Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. by Hans Reiss, tr. by H. B. Nisbett, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 54.

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oneself." Moreover, while courage and diligence are certainly necessary to sustain it, they are not so much a remedy for "immaturity" as they are constituents of the rational desire for understanding. Pace Kant, then, the question "What is man?" is meaningful only for one who acknowledges that he does not set the terms of his own humanity. That this discovery should result in a question, not in despair or wilfullness, comes of one's catching glimpses of an answer in the question itself: only the promise of intelligibility makes the question a reasonable one. Kant's inquiry makes sense only if human reason is moved, in confronting itself, by the hope or the desire for a truth seen but never fully possessed, which elicits, sustains, and guides his investigation.[21]

Whatever the premodern thinkers' limitations, they are not as hostile as Kant to the conditions of their own possibility. Manent concludes that modernity never really moves beyond the legacy of "Athens" and "Rome." That is not to say that he favors the notion that modern thought is a "secularized" form of Christianity.[22] He proposes, rather, that in its great desire to sublate Greek philosophy and Christian theology, it fails to give the truth of each its due, and so lies stranded between them (pp. 198–203). In order to flesh out this suggestion, *The City of Man* makes synecdochic use, in the final pages of the book, of the tension often said to obtain between the virtues of Greek magnanimity and Christian humility.[23]

Here are two ancient virtues, each purporting to be a summary of the human being at his best, yet each almost the antithesis, it would seem, of the other. The magnanimous man radiates with confidence in the independence of his "nature,"

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21. See Slade, "Was ist Aufklärng?" *op. cit.*, p. 59. As the "Preface to the First Edition" of the *First Critique* (Aviii) makes clear, Kant is aware that man's situation is such that human reason is "fated" to perplexity. But this is precisely why "critique" is necessary: to bring perpetual peace to "the battle-field of . . . endless controversies . . . called metaphysics." *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1964), p. 7. The elimination of "metaphysics" is the consequence of Kant's belief that man's perplexity about himself is ultimately absurd, something inexplicable; Kant's "system" allows little or no room for *knowledge* of ignorance.

22. See Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). More recently, Louis Dupré argues in *Passage to Modernity: an Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), that late medieval nominalism supplied most of the elements necessary for the birth of modernity. Hans Blumenberg's *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, tr. by Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1983) rejects Löwith's secularization thesis, emphasizing instead the role of "self-assertion." Contrary to Manent, however, Blumenberg's self-assertion is as inevitable as gravity; it is not really derived from philosophical reflection; it is, therefore, all but impossible to distinguish his "legitimation" of modernity from the abject worship of "progress" (see Blumenberg, p. 99). On the question of modernity's continuity with its ancient and medieval past, see "De la causalité historique," *op. cit.*, pp. 707-711.

23. This tension was anticipated in the book's opening chapter (pp. 25-26). For a comparable interpretation, see Harry Jaffa, *Thomism and Aristotelianism: a Study of the Commentary by Thomas Aquinas on the* Nicomachean Ethics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 134-41.

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and cheerfully disdains those who do not measure up to his greatness. The humble man cherishes his every neighbor, no matter how mean his estate, because of his awareness of their common dependence on a God whom he regards as the supernatural origin and destiny of them both. In contrast, "[m]odern man is the man who does not know how to be either magnanimous or humble" (p. 201). Such diffidence is embodied perfectly in Kantian respect for self-legislation. It forbids men of superior "natural" endowments to enjoy their superiority over those who are "less fortunate." Yet, it enjoins everyone, whatever his stature, to respect himself or his humanity. But how can the modern self enjoy the democratically circumscribed pride that is "self-respect," if it does not earn it somehow? And to earn it, must it not discover itself to be superior to some thing, if not some one else? This it does in its alleged overcoming of Greek nature and of Biblical supernature, which must therefore be at once presupposed and denied. "History" may then be seen to document our uneasy and unending liberation from the claims of the past (pp. 200-205).

Kant's inconsistencies prove, Manent supposes, that modernity cannot be given the last word about man. *The City of Man* does not wax nostalgic, however, for Manent does not assume that a simple recovery of the past is possible, given the palpable differences between its leading virtues. One has cause to be dissatisfied, however, with the differences as he here summarizes them. He respectfully allows that for Aquinas, at least, the tension between Christian humility and pagan magnanimity is more imagined than real. Nevertheless, he also asserts that Thomas' "honorable compromise" fails to "preserve what is proper to each" (p. 200). Suffice it to observe, however, that what Aristotle expressly identifies as the proper opposites to magnanimity, namely, pusillanimity and vanity, come no closer to depicting the humility of such a valiant soul as Loyola than does Greek magnanimity: Thomas was surely correct to argue that humility is not really contrary to magnanimity.[24]

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24. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-II, 129.3, cited by Manent, p. 200. Besançon makes essentially the same criticism in "Que signifie être moderne?" *op. cit.*, pp. 423-24, which otherwise endorses the book enthusiastically. Manent's reply is to be found in "De la causalité historique," *op. cit.*, pp. 711-14. Compare the thematic discussion of "magnanimity" at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1123a34–1125a35 with 1129b27–28, 1136b20–22, 1156b5–32, 1169b28–1170b18, 1178b3–5, 1179a3–9, 1177a12–1179b33. Aquinas also might not accept the position Manent attributes to the Thomists in his reply to Besançon, according to which "nature" is simply to be identified with the world as it comes to sight in Greek philosophy. Manent is well aware of Aquinas' dictum according to which "grace perfects nature" (*Summa theologiae* I, 1.8 ad 2), but according to Manent's own lights, what man is is best seen in man at his best, i.e., man as completed or perfected. It may well be that Greek philosophy provides the best available guide to the optimal realization of human life open to "fallen human nature" apart from the historical human encounter with grace; nevertheless, only from the vantage of grace would one be able to determine with precision just what man may achieve by nature, or on his own, so to speak. On the theological complexities involved in the distinction between nature and grace, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, tr. by Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), pp. 267–325.

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Moreover, Manent appears to overlook the possibility that, even from the standpoint of Greek philosophy, magnanimity does not exhaust the fullness of human nature; even its compatibility with the indigence of the philosopher is not obvious. In fairness to Manent, however, his comparison of these two virtues serves principally to announce, in the closing page of *The City of Man,* a study of "the science of Rome" — a science without which it is impossible to "understand more than the half of things" (p. 206).

Manent provides an analysis of the modern philosophic attempt to establish a fully human "city," a city consciously constructed without appeal to the city of God or to nature's *polis*, that is at once inviting and unnerving. Scholars and general readers alike may wonder at times about his decision to wage a campaign on so wide an interpretive front; yet, his learning is undoubtedly both broad and deep. He often moves to conclusions with such haste that he will test the patience of some; however, his penchant for aphorism and enthymeme enables him to cover a common historical ground in an uncommonly refreshing way; and when he does essay novel interpretive suggestions, they prove on reflection to be worth a serious hearing. The criticisms of the modern philosophers he has assembled here are trenchant and often even biting; still, he displays the physiognomy of their modernity with all the sympathy befitting a scholar's detachment.

The City of Man is enlivened by a playful wit. But there can be no mistaking the seriousness of Manent's purpose, which is to confront the presuppositions and implications of the properly modern account of the human being, and thereby to show how much the "modern" both reveals and conceals about the "human." While it is always rather disruptive to ask what kind of being man has become, the possibilities opened up by this question for what he may yet come to be make the disruption most welcome.

John C. McCarthy

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A Comet in a Leftist Galaxy

Andrew Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 272pp.

On the morning of April 23, 1971, a long line of Vietnam Veterans formed near the lower west terrace of the US Capitol building. Thousands of spectators and a contingent of journalists gathered around them. At 10 a.m., after an aged veteran in olive fatigues blew taps on a bugle, a 27-year-old former Marine sergeant named Jack Smith threw his combat medals over a crude chicken wire and wood fence that surrounded the Capitol. "We cast these [medals] away," he announced, "as symbols of shame, dishonor, and inhumanity" (p. 113). Observers estimated that between 600 and 3000 vets followed him, hurling their Silver Stars, Purple Hearts, and Distinguished Service awards back at a government they claimed had betrayed them. This somber ceremony was one of the most successful demonstrations against the war, and, in terms of media coverage, it overshadowed other marches that had attracted tens of thousands. According to Andrew Hunt's *The Turning*, never before "had such a widespread segment of the population looked so favorably upon protest as in the weeks following" this event (p. 118).

Although Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) was one of the premier protest organizations of the early 1970s, their role in the antiwar movement has been under-emphasized by writers who have focused instead on Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and individual movement leaders.[1] This is both ironic and predictable: ironic, since peace activists sometimes showed a prescient understanding of the pitfalls that awaited future chroniclers of their history;[2] predictable, because many historians who have written about the New Left were themselves members of SDS. As a result, recently a younger cadre of scholars has suggested that the reigning narrative of the antiwar movement reflects too closely the idiosyncratic perspectives of its architects.[3]

1. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987); James Miller, *"Democracy in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973).

2. As Jesse Lemisch observed: "We need hardly contend that the peace movement is on the brink of power today to note that a future historian who studies it from the top down . . . will seriously underestimate its numbers and the diversity of activities." See Jesse Lemisch, "New Left Elitism: A Rejoinder," in *Radical America*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1967), p. 37.

3. Wini Breines, ""Whose New Left?" in *Journal of American History* 75 (Sept., 1988), p. 543; David Farber, "The 60's: Myth and Reality," in *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Dec. 7, 1994), p. B1; Andrew Hunt, "Where did the Sixties Happen? Searching for New Directions," in *Journal of Social History* (Sept. 1999), p. 33; Rick Perlstein, "Who Owns the Sixties? The Opening of a Scholarly Generation Gap," in *Lingua Franca* (May/June, 1996), pp. 30-37.

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By mining new sources and deploying new interpretive frameworks, in *The Turning* Hunt emerges as a leading figure of the revisionist effort to understand the 1960s. As he points out: "from the bottom up," VVAW "could boast of everything that [SDS] claimed: tens of thousands of members . . . chapters in all parts of the country; sponsorship of social programs . . . and, by 1972, policy papers containing critiques of capitalism that surpassed SDS's founding manifesto, the Port Huron Statement, in scope and sophistication" (p. 2). VVAW was harassed by the FBI, drew national attention, and profoundly shaped the American peace movement, injecting antiwar protest with new vigor, legitimacy, and tactics just as student activity seemed to ebb in the early 1970s (pp. 1-2). The organization stands as a rebuke to those who see the post-1968 New Left as a catastrophe. Yet, it is not mentioned in any of the main works on the New Left, save for Gitlin's *The Sixties*, where it merits only a sentence (in a chapter called "Fadeout").

Just as the emergence of SDS was not as spontaneous as it must have seemed to those who were out of the loop, VVAW was not entirely unprecedented. By the mid-1960s, veterans from other wars were protesting against Vietnam, and there were always stirrings of dissent from within the armed forces. Moreover, at the April 1967 "Spring Mobilization to End the War," when some 300,000 protesters marched from Central Park to the UN building, a contingent of Vietnam veterans led the way. Prefiguring a pattern that would recur again, counter-demonstrators unwittingly contributed to the effectiveness of the protest: although they delighted in making fun of hippies, red-baiting peaceniks, and dismissing antiwar students as "cowards" and "snobs," they also realized that the Vietnam veterans knew more about the horrors of the war than anyone. When they passed by, even the most ardent hecklers fell silent.

One of the reluctant marchers that day was Jan Barry, a former West Point cadet who had served a full tour of duty in Vietnam before he grew disgusted by the war and left the military. Like many veterans, protest did not come easily to Barry, and he was initially horrified at the thought of "marching through the streets, making a fool of myself" (p. 13). But he also realized the potential for GI involvement in the peace movement, and, soon after the Spring march, he and six other antiwar veterans drafted the bylaws that served as the basis for VVAW. By November 1967, they spearheaded a petition that ran in the *New York Times*, where sixty-five veterans labeled the war "wrong, unjustifiable, and contrary to the principles on which the [US] was founded." Their own protest, they said, was "the highest form of patriotism" (p. 14).

Although VVAW owed its origins to a cadre of quixotic, committed activists who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, most of the early joiners were political moderates from blue-collar backgrounds. Many members never attended college at all. Moreover, these architects of VVAW never envisioned it as a multi-issue organization. Instead, they aimed to build the organization on a purely antiwar platform, and they had grave doubts about the excesses of countercultural protestors.

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Only in hindsight did it become clear that the organization suffered the defects of what it thought to be its virtues. Although members effectively appeared at debates and demonstrations, and sometimes even on radio and television programs, they were a clean-cut lot who still believed in "the system," and who counted on a McCarthy victory in 1968 to end the war. As a result, they won little support from the radical elements of the peace movement, whose numbers by this time could be measured in the hundreds of thousands. Moreover, when their faith in electoral poltics was shattered at the 1968 Democratic Convention, VVAW leaders were unsure of where to turn. "As the turbulent sixties drew to a close," the financially insolvent, organizationally handicapped, and ideologically adrift VVAW seemed "to be yet another defunct antiwar organization" (p. 32).

Around 1969, however, a steady influx of new recruits began to flush out the old guard of VVAW's leadership and carry the organization leftward. Adopting angrier, more urgent rhetoric and playing a leading role at several campus demonstrations, the new VVAWers were galvanized by reports of atrocities committed by American G.I.'s, by Nixon's expansion of the war into Cambodia, and by the National Guard killings of student demonstrators. Meanwhile, the GI press expanded its operations, creating mimeographed bulletins such as *Fatigue Press*, *Open Sights,* and *The Ally* that "provided a crucial forum for dissent and kindled resistance within the military" (p. 34). Distrustful of dovish Democrats and no longer content to be a purely antiwar operation, VVAW took on other issues that veterans faced, including the shameful conditions at many VA hospitals, drug abuse, homelessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Many members took part in group therapy sessions, which sometimes led to enormous personal tranformations. Veterans who had heretofore been steeped in Cold War rhetoric, and who had first-hand experience with the raffish behavior and crude treatment of women that was an unfortunate part of wartime culture, later took part in VVAW meetings on such charged issues as sexism, racism, and capitalism.

Operation Rapid American Withdrawal (RAW), of September 1970, was both VVAW's first foray into guerrilla theater, and its first national demonstration. Grizzled vets brandished combat fatigues, face paint, camping gear, C-rations and toy rifles as they embarked on a four-day "simulated search-and-destroy mission" between Morristown, New Jersey and Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. At each town they passed through, they left fliers that announced "*A U.S. infantry company just came through here.*" Had the townsfolk there been Vietnamese, these leaflets proclaimed, they might have been shot, raped, tortured, or had their houses burned to the ground (p. 51). The *New York Times* provided daily coverage of the campaign, and one member described it as a "veteran's Woodstock" for the magical camaraderie it inspired among its participants.

For most veterans, however, the signal event in VVAW's history was "Dewey Canyon III," when thousands of Vietnam vets from across the country descended on Washington, DC and set up a "tent city" style campground in Potomac Park in

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April, 1971. During the first few days of protest, veterans marched, attended memorial ceremonies, and lobbied at Capitol Hill. One morning, a contingent of some 75 veterans lock-stepped over to the Pentagon to surrender themselves as war criminals, whereupon they met a perplexed Air Force General who told them to "try the Justice Department" (p. 104). Police threatened to close down the encampment, but, behind-the-scenes, Nixon's wary advisors prevented local officials from cracking down on the demonstrators. John Kerry (now a senator from Massachusetts) offered stirring testimony on the VVAW's behalf before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was broadcast to millions. But the highlight of the campaign was the April 23 medal throwing ceremony, which drew almost universally sympathetic media coverage, and "became a crucial rallying symbol" for antiwar protestors.

As a result, 1972 saw "an all-out federal offensive against the organization. Harassment, infiltration, thefts, telephone buggings, and arrests became commonplace" (p. 142). FBI informers and agent provocateurs offered to sell the VVAW elaborate weapons in an effort to steer the organization toward violence, but, as it turns out, the only people ever injured by the VVAW were about a dozen hapless members of the American Nazi Party, who unwisely tried to seize their public address system at a rally in Miami Beach. ("We kicked their ass really bad" one vet remembered [p. 156]). Later that year, however, eight members were arrested on charges so outlandish that one imagines they came straight from a James Bond film: prosecutors alleged VVAW conspired to disrupt the Republican National Convention with "firebombs, automatic weapons, slingshot-propelled fireworks, wrist rockets and crossbows." Of course, VVAW never planned anything of the sort, and eventually all eight members were acquited. But VVAW did make a show at the convention when three veterans, including the celebrated activist Ron Kovick, locked their wheelchairs together and interrupted Nixon's acceptance speech with chants of "Stop the bombing! Stop the war!" (p. 161).

At its peak, VVAW amassed a membership of some 25,000 — a figure that plummeted sharply after the war came to a halt, even as some members made their best efforts to keep VVAW afloat as a left-wing alternative to groups such as Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the American Legion. Instead, the group fell prey to factional infighting and sectarian arrogance, a decline in interest, and a deterioration of resources as the group fended off a steady stream of assaults from the federal government. But even if VVAW was not the most celebrated or enduring organization of the 1960s, it certainly deserved the accolade of a *Miami Herald* headline, which called it a "Comet in [a] Leftist Galaxy."[4]

VVAW propelled Vietnam vets to the very forefront of the antiwar movement in the early 1970s, and wherever the vets appeared, they were a staid and serious presence that few could ignore. Hunter S. Thompson recognized something of

4. *Miami Herald* (July 9, 1972); as quoted by Hunt, p. 163.

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the group's import in 1972: "There was an ominous sense of dignity about everything the VVAW did . . ." he recalled. "Their very presence was menacing — on a level that the Yippies, Zippies, and SDS street crazies never even approached, despite their yelling and trashing."[5]

As Hunt suggests in his penultimate chapter, "Making Peace," "healing has become a high priority for the men and women who joined VVAW in the 1960s and 1970s" (p. 189). Some veterans found various ways to sustain their activism, whereas others pursued careers in academia, law, and countless other professions. Inevitably, still others have died or disappeared. But, unlike so many other protest groups of the 1960s, VVAW still exists, albiet as a much smaller, informal, and less influential organization. "An obituary," writes Hunt, "is still forthcoming (p. 167). Nevertheless, in unearthing the colorful and sometimes poignant history of VVAW, and by deploying the methods of a social historian to render its story in compelling fashion, Hunt has given the former activists some of the historical recognition they deserve.

The 1960s movements owe much to the founders of SDS, and to the pop icons of later years who brought creativity and humor to student demonstrations. But, as this book suggests, the New Left was a broader-based phenomenon than most accounts acknowledge, and studies which do not reflect this diversity are bound to be limited. When the history of VVAW is thrown into the mix, the familiar story of the New Left's rise and fall is complicated. Whereas most historians trace the New Left's roots to an established parent organization, the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), VVAW emerged on its own, to become the only GI group to oppose the Vietnam War. Although the precocious intellects that founded SDS relied heavily on C. Wright Mills, French existentialism, and theories of participatory democracy, the antiwar veterans — variously described as "grizzled," "gritty" and "blue collar" — came to the movement on the basis of the horror and carnage they had wintessed in Southeast Asia. Finally, scholars who have alleged that the post-1968 New Left was preoccupied with revolutionary rhetoric, hedonism, drug abuse, and ineffectual, mindless violence, and that it suddenly "collapsed, plummeting into cultural oblivion as if it had been some kind of political Hula Hoop,"[6] will have to recognize the degree to which the history of VVAW refutes this conclusion. For, as Hunt convincingly demonstrates, "VVAWers kept the antiwar movement alive at a time when so many Americans had surrendered to cynicism and complacency . . . The antiwar veterans overcame self-pity, avoided bitterness, and substituted passive withdrawl for active confrontation. In doing so, they contributed significantly to ending the war in Vietnam" (p. 201).

John McMillian

5. Hunter S. Thompson, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72* (New York: Warner Books, 1973), p. 387; as quoted by Hunt, p. 158.

6. Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

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